



VEDANTA AS A SOCIAL FORCE

(The Quest of a Century from Rammohan to Sri Aurobindo)

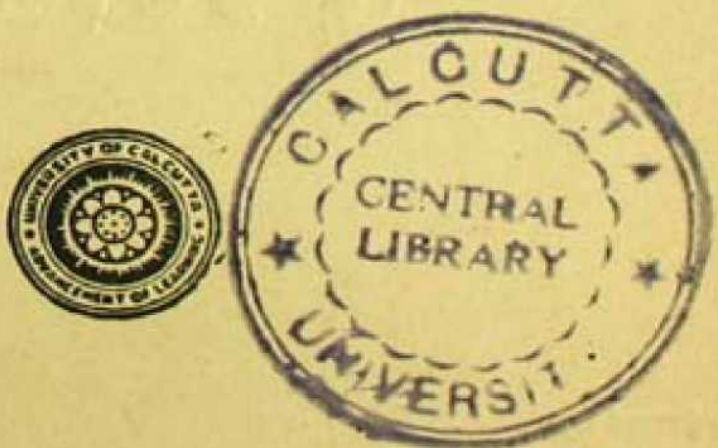
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By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Pages</i>
I	The significance of the Nineteenth Century in India—Impact of Western Thought, Science and Technology. Challenge, Response and Assimilation	1—8
II	Vedanta—a generic term, a heritage of rationality to understand the harmony of Nature. Vedanta as a social force, its text and context.	8—15
III	Practical Vedanta—Not merely Sankar's monism or Ramanuja's dualism or any other approach to Reality, but a doctrine for the service of Man. Sense of a liberal humanism	15—19
IV	What is Vedanta? Life is an unity, an integral whole. Social causes become spiritual causes	19—23
V	Raja Rammohan Roy—An estimate and a re-estimate	23—31
VI	Rammohan and Indian Renaissance	31—38
VII	Christianity in India from the earliest times to the Nineteenth Century. Its role and impact. Western ideas invade Eastern Society	38—53
VIII & IX	The Message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Other movements, their difference and delineation	53—62
X	Rabindranath Tagore and the Religion of Man.	62—80
XI	Two Seers—Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo	80—87
XII	Sri Aurobindo—The Man and the Messiah—His social philosophy	87—98

XIII	An Emerging World Community—Concepts for co-ordination and collaboration.	98—104
Appendix I—	Vivekananda-Nivedita-Rabindranath (Nivedita Lectures)	105
Appendix II—	Swami Vivekananda Orator, Writer, Art Critic (Prologue Vivekananda Lectures)	131
Appendix III—	Keshub Chandra Sen (Prologue to Brahma- nanda Keshub Chandra Sen Lectures)	155
Appendix IV—	A Spiritual Concept of Art	165

Yea, in my mind these mountains rise
Their perils dyed with evening's rose
And still my ghost sits at my eyes
And thirsts for their untroubled snows.

These are lines from Walter de la Mare which Jawaharlal Nehru once quoted while sitting in prison and having glimpses of World History. One day he was reading George Buchner's famous play Danton's Tod. It took him back to the wild and stirring days of the French Revolution and his mind rushed forwards and backwards. Is an individual only a foam on the wave, greatness a mere accident, the mastery of genius, a mere puppet play, a ridiculous struggle against an Iron Law ?

More than a hundred years have passed from Rammohun to Aurobindo. A Century has been in travail. The impact of new ideals and ideas has been significant. Preachers have preached, poets have sung, social reformers have tried to bring in a new milieu, scientists have gone forth to forge new links, philosophers to create new dimensions of thought, new havens of rehabilitation. Yet the elemental urges still consume us. We go from tragedy to tragedy and are left behind in the process of history as Danton was.

Ding-dong-ding-dong. The bell tolled twelve. A BOAC Boeing was speeding ahead from London to New York. We had just touched Shannon on the Irish Coast. We could hear the church gong ding-dong, in a slow crescendo mounting to a pitch. Was it a call to the Faithful, a midnight mass to rally the wavering clan to a cult of God or was it the repetition



of an age-old ritual bereft of its vital urge and lost in lifeless routine ? In our ancient land, hoary with the lore of the Mystic East, we would be told by our wisemen that the midnight heralded the Mother's hour, the hour before the gods awake. Night would be darkest but it would awaken to the anthem of the stars. Soon the sky would be ablaze with a red tinge. A new day would dawn, a new horizon, a new dimension of hope and effort, of aspiration and endeavour. Would it be divorced from its parent yesterday or would it bulge into a beaming tomorrow ? These were the thoughts which flashed in my mind as I was talking in the plane with a young Texas Engineer, who was returning to Mexico from Spain. He had seen the bull fights, he had seen the Matadors, the hot scenarios, the hotter señoritas. This was his first trip to Europe, in search of a bride. He had seen oriental glamour with moorish effusiveness. He was impressed but not impregnated. He asked me what I was doing in London. I told him that I was just passing through and in between, I had spent some of my time in the British Museum, that famous Bloomsbury Institution of world repute. Oh ! those mummy cases and stone figures—I was aghast. Was it typical of the angry and hungry youngmen and women all over the world ? Was it an indication of the change of values from our days ? The memory of the hours spent there and the wonder with which one would move from room to room, from the Egyptian marvels to the Micronesian relics, from the Nineveh gallery to the Graeco-Roman exhibits, from the Elgin marbles to the metopes, was still haunting me. The colossal Rameses, the Guttenberg Bible, the first folio Shakespeare, the first edition of the Paradise Lost, which has yet to be regained, may not interest all but what about universal pictures like Leonardo da Vinchi's 'The Virgin of the Rock' or Raphael's 'Crucifixion' or Murillo's 'Two Trinities'.

We go west. Soon, very soon, Manhattan would be calling me, the statue of Liberty would beckon. I would hear America singing, the varied carols as Walt Whitman would say—Cara-



vans, street cars, chain stores, movies, automobiles, television, hotels and motels, chewing gums and Quizz competition.

Then ho, brother ho
To California go
There is plenty of gold
In the world we are told
On the banks of Sacramento.

Side by side shall we read "We mutually pledge to each other our fortunes, our safety, our honour, our lives". Would the ghost of a pioneer like Ceaser Rodney ride eighty miles in thunder and in rain to cast a vote in the Delaware delegation ? Would a Patrick Henry cry—"Give me liberty or give me death" ? They wanted men to match their mountains.

Remember the day, December 1942, when the world entered into the atomic age. Enrico Fermi found the chain reaction after the division of an atom. Its discovery severed past from present and in 1955 after the Oppenheimer trial, the scientists threw this challenge before every thinking man, whether in the East or the West—"Here then is the problem which we present to him, stark and dreadful and inescapable. Shall we put an end to the human race or shall mankind renounce them ? The light of a thousand stars is now in men's hands. It should light up the world and its civilization and not plunge them into total darkness". Love may be more powerful than violence, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan may talk of the 'Recovery of Faith', Dr. Sorokin of 'Reconstruction of Humanity', a Tolstoy, a Rolland, a Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi may still inspire a few, but the fact remains that we are in an age of hate and spite, of nuclear bombardment and atomic warfare, of robots and brain washing, of inter-space travel and ballistic missiles. We stand at the crossroads and say like a Jestling Pilate—What is truth ? To whom shall we make our obeisance ?

Can India in this crisis of civilization help with her traditional culture values reoriented and readapted to the changing needs of the day? To-day human mind, faced as it is with an imminent doom, is hungry for something deeper in terms of moral, aesthetic and spiritual development. Anything which raises man above his normal level gives the human personality a new dimension of spiritual quality and moral depth. We live in a strange world which vacillates between deep disillusionments and great expectations. We react to any stimulus, we assimilate newer ideas. We regenerate new hopes. Yet the tragedy is that we have failed to achieve a correct balance. The mere compulsion of tradition has lost its force. We see around us the debris of collapsing creeds. The world has become small. Any day it may be smashed to pieces. There may be death and disease, defeat and disaster. Radio-active falls out, deathrays are not mere Jules Verne stories or Walt Disney presentations. A man is a machine that argues, he debates, he experiments in laboratories, he stoops to conquer time and space. He perfects his technique, takes pride in his technology. Yet he is the same man who sits in contemplation, who goes to the snow-capped mountain top, retires to the deepest cavern. He looks at the blue sky, the deep brine and withdraws from life and society. Again, you see him mad in orgies, he drinks, he flirts. He is money-making, he is merry-making-on with the dance. But all of them ask in their heart of hearts, at every nook and corner of the earth—wherein lies the truth? Unless we know the solution of this first and fundamental problem, any remedy will be as elusive and ever. Is it merely the economic problem of food and shelter, of live and let live, of equitable distribution of wealth and its resources or is it merely the problem of a new valuation, a new God, a new spiritual dimension, a quality of a gentle equilibrium and poise and not merely a pose or a make-up? We want to rediscover the essence of human nature. In our haste to make the best of life, we make it worst and forget that it is mainly, if not wholly, a

question of harmony and how to adjust oneself not only against society and its environments including world conditions but also against himself. According to Bertrand Russell three types of conflict have afflicted human mind. They are the conflicts of man with nature, with other man and with himself. The first is the concern of science, the second of politics and the third of religion and psychology. To quote his own words : "Man has emerged from the desert into a smiling land, but in the long night he has forgotten how to smile. We think it trivial and deceptive. We cling to old myths Man now needs for his salvation only one thing ; to open up his heart to joy He must lift up his face and say 'No, I am not a miserable sinner.....'."

Bereft of its trappings, explanations and elucidations, the fundamental Indian thought from its Vedic and Upanishadic days has laid stress on this side of the intellectual compact. This is the spiritual quest. We have of course been overtaken by history and ours is the story of a great failure with the pace of a Greek tragedy. That was the problem which our Nineteenth Century forefathers had to face. The impact from the West made them sit up and think. They wanted to build on surer foundations. Indian thought and culture values laid emphasis on 'Dharma', not the ritualistic dogmatic tenets but the way of living, the binding essence which keeps society afloat. It was also felt that the social order was to be a harmony of 'Artha', 'Kama' and 'Dharma' so as to raise the integral process to an all-embracing realization which would not be a mere denial or negation but was to be an all-pervasive rapprochement and a fulfilled destiny. That was to be 'Moksha' and not merely annihilation, extinction or merger in a greater entity. Nineteenth Century's great contribution in Bengal and in India was the recovery of this faith in the saga of humanity and from Rammohun to Aurobindo, each one put it in his own light but behind it flashed the ultimate faith in the divinity of humanity and of humanity in divinity. Rabindranath

Tagore in his 'Religion of Man' pointed out in his inimitable language the inner significance of the four 'Asramas'. 'Brahmacharya' was to be the period of study and discipline, 'Garhasthya', the active life of a participator in social and community affairs, 'Banaprastha' being the period when one must begin loosening his bonds of passion and prejudice, if any, and finally, 'Yati or Prabajya' when one waits calmly for freedom in death, the great dissolver. It is the concept of social wellbeing from individual to community, from community to universe and from universe to eternity, not in water-tight compartments, but in a welded whole, mellowed by discipline and social service, hallowed by renunciation and contemplation in the end. This is the Indian ideal in its essence. This is in a way the result of her composite culture, enriched by different strands of life with an effort to assimilate it with varying success into one fabric. It has, however, to be acknowledged that at times the ascetic element of denial was more prominent in the spiritual quest of India. There was another and more vital criticism. From the hoary past right up to day, India has not lacked in her long procession of saints and sages from Vedic ages to today's Rammohun, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Rabindranath, Gandhi, Dayananda, Raman Maharshi, Vallathol or Bharati. Yet squalor and ignorance, poverty and prejudice, social injustice and political bondage, economic serfdom and unhygienic living still haunt the land. In old days a dogged life and a rugged living could do the trick. The modern man can no more believe. To a spiritually minded man today, religion is not merely a bundle of dogmas, a medley of rites, a cluster of rituals. Up to a point, they may be necessary, but life today is a quest, a venture, it is an expedition to the realm of the unknown. Life is Infinite, its ways are Infinite. Each one of us has to be a chooser and find his salvation. From the days of dim antiquity it has been the privilege of Man to join in the search for the Holy Grail, be he a vedic sage, an Upanishadic seer, a Japanese Zen,

an atomic scientist, a Chinese Taoist, a Greek philosopher, a Mahajani Buddhist or an Islamic Sufi. Life is synthesis. Life is Light. Life is Yoga. Life means every facet of experience, every mode of experience, physical, supra-physical, unconscious, subconscious and supra-conscious. If we appreciate this fundamental fact of Indian thought and culture, we need not be unhappy about the disintegration of the ancient social pattern, because of changes in the objective conditions due either to a fast-moving technology, rapid means of communication, the impact of an underdeveloped economy. We have the seed of renewal in this concept of culture. And in this we will be a world worker and all work that is good is world work and is universal in character. This was the Nineteenth Century's dream in India and particularly in Bengal through her stalwarts from Rammohun to Rabindranath. It is true that this dream was originally confined to the upper classes and was but partially realized. In studying the evaluation of this dream and quest we have to realize that as Robert Frost, the poet, would say that we have miles to go. This is the real prayer even in a tragic generation. And prayer is more than an order of words. The main subconscious idea of the stalwarts of the Nineteenth Century was to develop a nondenominational Religion of 'Man' in the words of Rabindranath which would flower into a creative identification in the service of Man as Vivekananda would put it. In those days of *angst* and alienation, the words such as God, Religion, Spiritual Quest have not only lost their moorings in national consciousness but create allergic reaction in the minds of many, particularly of the younger age, wedded to technological pursuits and given to the mechanistic growth of the world. In a speech which Dr. Kalidas Bhattacharya, a savant of repute, recently delivered, he referred to the basic fact that the youth of today will listen if we speak to them in a language they understand. The language they are at home with is that of alienation and its conquest. It is

worth quoting him in extenso—"whether it was with Christ or Buddha in ancient days or, in recent past with Gandhi, Vivekananda and Aurobindo, we had the dynamic reformers only in the context of a world that had grown serious rifts and contradictions in all walks of life. There was alienation everywhere. Man found himself alienated by nature, individuals by social and religious customs, the poor by the rich, the worker by the master and his machine, the low by the high, juniors by the senior, the led by the leaders, villagers by townsmen, the conquered by the conqueror and the rank and file by men in power.

As long as the exploiter by his cunning and strength can keep the alienated in check things appear to go on smoothly. But, sooner or later the game is found. The alienated begin to fret and the discontent spreads, gaining momentum as time passes by, and signs of revolutionary break with the past and violent adjustment emerge on the surface. It is always at such junctures that the world finds great men teaching how things should be set at right and many of them acting up to that." The ancient traditional creed of Vedanta was resurrected and reinterpreted throughout the Nineteenth Century to suit such social needs. It was not individual or class freedom pseudo-spiritualized, but an involvement in bettering social relations; a recognition of human dignity. That is Practical Vedanta or Vedanta in action. As a matter of fact, the Maoist Philosophers contend that correct ideas come from social practice alone and that this should be considered as a development on Marxist idea—There can be no knowledge apart from practice.

II

The one generic term that was freely used in this century was the word 'Vedanta' which literally meant the end

product of the knowledge of the Vedas. Vedanta claims to be an exposition of the deepest truth of Vedas which record the experiences of those who gained knowledge of the highest order through intuition and introspection. It was to be a release and not merely a realization. Man is already one with the Real (according to Advaita interpretation—सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म, ऐतदात्म्यं इदं सर्वं) but knowledge alone brings realization, but this is to be achieved not merely by reason and intellect, by न्याय or तर्क because limited human intellect can never hope to fathom the nature of the Illimitable and the Ultimate. Yet it has to be linked with one of our recognised systems. As Mimansa was founded on the Brahman, so the Upanishads formed the bed-rock of the Vedantin, and Sankar's interpretation though it became the core of Advaitic Monism was not the only way of looking at the Ultimate Reality.

अथोत्तरेण तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया विद्यया आत्मानमन्विष्य आदित्यमभि-
जयन्ते, सर्वं सर्वत्र प्राप्य सर्वमेवाविशन्ति. Vedanta in its wide compass and its integral realization did not merely veto negatives but posited affirmatives also. Vedanta in its broad concept was not therefore merely subjective-objective correlative extra-empirical studies but also an identification of values from different levels and an illumination of witnessing consciousness where चित्-अचित् ग्रन्थि is differentiated. That is how the Rishis of the old, men and women explained it, from Janaka and Yajnavalkya, Maitreyi and Gargi, Pippalad and Prabahana, Arani and Uddalaka, Yama and Nachiketa and later Sankara and Ramanuja, Madhwa and Nimbarka, Ballava and Jadabprakas, Sukha and Madhusudan Saraswati, Baladeva Vidyabhushana and Bijnan Vikshu.

When the nineteenth century in India woke up through the impact of western shock to the realities of the situation, its stalwarts like Rammohun, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Rabindranath, Aurobindo tried, each in his own way, to take shelter under an inspiring name called Vedanta and tried to

regraft into the social national body some of the values which the Vedantic principles inculcated, a reoriented study of which was one of the main features of the Indian Renaissance from Rammohun to Sri Aurobindo. It is a fact that by tenth century A.D. we had in India achieved a form of unity from land to land and from sea to sea. It was so to say, a broad-based unity in ideas, religious concepts and ritualistic formalities. From the snowcapped Himalayas to Cape Comorin we would talk of the same Siva, Devi or Vishnu, the same law of Karma, the same social order of four castes. That unity was deeper and fundamental, though there were diversities as well, sometimes converging into rigidity which would be a greater barrier than an apparent uniformity. If this basic fact of unity in diversity and diversity in unity is realized then we may attempt to build our history and study its evolution in centuries to come, not on monarchs, dynasties or invaders but view it from the (value-centric) basis, social and cultural, though at the same time, we should not attempt too much or make the fatal mistake of putting undue emphasis on certain aspects of culture concept without the rigid discipline of facts weighed subjectively and objectively in their proper texts and contexts. History today is not merely a record of events. It has lengthened, deepened and widened in nature and scope. If, as we believe, the history of a people lies in their social, economic and mental growth or decline, then the material for this lies not merely in the discoveries of archaeologists or epigraphists—important though they are, not only in their collective expressions such as art, literature, religion or social behaviour pattern but also in the correlation of the forces generated by the impact, the clash, the challenge, the response, the assimilation, be it of the dominant minority or the internal proletariat or an external force or in the '*angst*' or alienation.

The nineteenth century is not only the harbinger of a new epoch for India, politically, culturally and socially but it

is practically the part of a new world history that was emerging. If we look at the historical pattern of the nineteenth century and its impact on the twentieth flanked by its numerous discoveries, technological progresses, scientific gains we will see a rationalist outlook in life, a sceptic or agnostic approach to spiritual values, and the struggle for power by the colonial groups and the haves and have-nots. Right from the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, 1830 and 1848 risings, German and Italian unity, Marxist, Socialist and Anarchist concepts of life into the Russian Revolution, we would see that this was the age when the West was spreading into a world context, not for any altruistic motives but mainly for expansion of trade and commerce, for national aggrandisement than international co-ordination or co-operation. Colonialism and Capitalism flourished, ideas of determinism and democracy germinated. Pax-Britannica, racing through the Seven Seas meant peace and prosperity, for those who were lucky to be partners in the game. The 'have-nots' were still basking in the sunshine of More's Utopia. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau were forging new concepts of social compact. Danton, Robespierre, Marat were fighting. They were the Boston Brahmins, where the Lowells talked to Cabots, or Cabots to Lodges just as the Hapsburgs nodded to the Bourbons and the Bourbons to the gods. The man in the streets whether he was in Rome or Paris, London or Berlin would not be much bothered. One century changed all these and since the history in India came to be linked with that of Britain, it had its inevitable repercussions on the Indian social fabric also, not only in the quotations of Shakespeare or Milton, Hegel, Rousseau or Ruskin but in a slow indoctrination to a new way of life, a new lingering of thought, a reorientation of ideas with a consequent revaluation of values. But more than anything else it touched the subconscious and emotional part of us and our forefathers were called upon by this impact to make very sudden adjustment

to a new world of ideas and values. That is the history of the nineteenth century in Bengal, if we evaluate it against the background of a clash, a challenge, a response and a pull. We have been accustomed to compare it with its counterpart in the European history and call it a renaissance. Historians may dispute whether it is a nascence or a re-nascence but we have to understand its significance, its pathos, its psychological complexes and not merely its politico-economic implications but its socio-religious impulses well. The names of our national heroes by whom we still swear from Rammohun to Aurobindo come clustering together and they may be studied as representative men of the era. If we catalogue them—Rammohun, Dwarkanath, Debendranath, Kesabchandra, Vidyasagar, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Bhudeb, Michael, Bankim, Rabindranath, Aurobindo, Jagadischandra, Prafullachandra, Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Nandalal, Subhaschandra and many many others, we get at once an idea of how yesterday had flowered into today with the promise of a gay tomorrow. We talk of a miniature renaissance, we talk of a political rejuvenescence, of a literary revival, of a flowering of intellect, a synthesis of thought, a scientific attitude towards life, an economic build-up with a political salvation. A Spiritual Quest or a Vedantic movement is the generic name that I apply to this all-pervasive reaction, still confined to the middle classes, and I have chosen only a few of the many illustrious names and deal with certain aspects of their lives and teachings so as to bring out the Universal Man's spiritual quest in them and their deeper significance on Indian life and its emergence as a social force. I know that by doing this I am laying myself open to the same charge as had been levelled against Will Durant that he was attempting to center the story of philosophy around certain dominant personalities. This reminds us of the Toynbeeian theory of the challenge of our times and refuge in the doctrine that final end of humanity was to "glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever". But who is this God? Is He not to be liberated



from the time-honoured spiritual bondage, thanks to the advance of modern science, technology and psycho-analysis? Man's faith in himself is his appeal to the diversity within him and not to any outside force. Is Man the end product of a long process of organic and non-organic evolution? He is that and much more. He is also a maker and a remaker. He has traces of his animal ancestry, yet he has to harness his achievements to the demands of his higher nature. History's headache has always been not to create but to depict a reasonably decent human society and incidentally to dissect the conditions. I am speaking of History as a synthetic growth and not as an analytical record. A historian proper is not merely a recorder of events but an enquirer unto the causes of the same. Even if we delink time-honoured spiritual craving from the stream of human life and achievements and postulate a no-God, a cult of no cult, Man has to rediscover the essence of his nature, including the biological heritage of rationality. It may be empiric, "but it is a microcosmic echo of the rhythm of the cosmos".

As one distinguished writer says—"The world we are living in is in a state of flux. The pace of evolution in our age is terrifying and it will be more so in the days to come in our brave new world. We are being faced with situations which juxtapose with frightening rapidity. To evaluate and interpret this age with vision and to give it a meaning we need the genius of poets and writers who have a sense of history and historians who have a sense of truth and eternal values." That was what happened in the nineteenth century in Bengal and the stalwarts whom I have named were the men with that vision. The fact is that one has to ascend the witch mountains (Goethe's concept) but not for the last time. This is the fate of Homo Sapiens in every age and every clime because human nature being what it is, its expression in human endeavour



is bound to be varied. To illustrate the same in Goethe's words "Two souls alas dwell in my breast.....the one clings to the world.....the other lifts itself.....to the realms of an exalted ancestry."

Even though the words are placed in the mouths of Satan, the truth is

Grey, my dear friend is all theory
And green the golden tree of life.

Yet,

The earth's uplook to a remote unknown
Is a preface only of the epic climb
Of human soul to an eternal state.

(Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri—The Secret Knowledge*)

As a contrast to this attitude, the Marxian philosophy which is now swaying human mind is rooted in empiricism. Marx drew his inspiration from Hegel whose dialectic method he accepted but abandoned idealistic interpretation of reality. In his view, nothing in the universe is final, absolute, divine or sacred. There is no conscious purpose in the evolution of the world. Everything in nature is relative, changing, transitory. Material motion takes place due to the struggle of the opposites. The mental processes are nothing but a function of the brain. To a man holding Marxist interpretation as correct, history is shaped by economic events and religion is an emotional and false approach to reality. We have seen many interpretations and reinterpretations as also restatements of this doctrine but while admitting and acknowledging that Marx's interpretation and summation of the political and economic base was not only a great landmark in the history of thought and was the signal of a revolutionary urge to reshape humanity in a new way, the difficulty was that it was not as complete an answer to all the social problems as one would like it to be. Apart from the impact of the subconscious



and the unconscious in our behaviour pattern which the modern psychologists think as the drawback of a material interpretation of history, Sorokin has criticised this doctrine on the ground that the economic factor is not exclusively sufficient to explain all the social processes including the formation of the State.* Karl Mannheim has pointed out how status stratification, social stratification and a sense of social mobility have brought a quiet revolution in social thinking but is history determined merely by blind economic forces which control the individual. That man's creative genius has played and does play a crucial role in historical development, is admitted by Sri M. N. Roy in his 'Reason, Romanticism and Revolution', and one has to liberate it from the time-honoured spiritual bondage, thanks to the advancement of modern science and technology, but Man must rediscover the essence of his nature. It was not to believe but to question and enquire. The biological heritage of rationality enables man to penetrate deeper and deeper to understand the harmony of nature. Rationality according to him is a biological function, which is a microcosmic echo of the rhythm of cosmos.

III

When Vivekananda speaks of Practical Vedanta it is not merely Sankar's Monistic Advaita as a spiritual truth, but it is also an approach to the service of Man. It is the reassertion of a maxim which is the link between the secular and the spiritual. Man is essentially Divine and man-making religion is worship of

* Sorokin, P. A.—Contemporary Social Theories, p. 533, quoted in "Masters of Social Thought" by Dr. A. K. Sinha and Dr. Klosternaster, Lakshi Narayan Agarwal, Education Publisher, Agra.

the Virat in one of his most pertinent forms. Otherwise what does Advaita Vedanta teach us—Brahma is that everything which is the only reality, everything else is unreal. The argument is that everything is covered by Brahma—ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं—Truth is one. Sages call it by various names. In his address to the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893 he said—By Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws.¹ He also asserted, which was so far not so specifically stated, that while there was no doubt that the goal of life was the spiritual realisation and the fullest manifestation of the Divine Within, in life and conduct, one has to have food and clothing, shelter and security, power and knowledge, politics and society, not as ends in themselves but as means for the full development of man. The idea of service as worship, as a spiritual practice is slightly different from the Christian concept of charity or the Buddhist elaboration of मैत्री or करुणा or compassion or the modern concept of humanitarianism or even radical humanism. It was to be something more than a co-operative commonwealth. Vivekananda however looked at the positive side only—“The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course animals are temples also, but man is the highest, the Tajmohal.....”² He beautifully summarized the stories of Svetketu, Satyakama, Nachiketa and showed that the ideals of Vedanta were oneness, the unity in diversity and as its corollary the innate divinity of Man. It had to be practical. Though strictly speaking the world never exists in Brahma and will never exist according to the metaphysical status of Sankar's Advaita philosophy, in Swami Vivekananda we find a positive

¹ The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol I, pp. 4-5.

² Swami Vivekananda—Practical Vedanta, Advaita Asrama, Calcutta—frontispiece.

movement.³ “He who is one, who is above all colour, creed or distinction, who dispenses inherent needs of many men and many hues, who comprehends all things from their beginning to the end, let Him unite us to one another and with the wisdom of goodness.” This is one of the famous prayers which Rabindranath Tagore loved to quote often. The poet’s religion was of course a multicoloured one. His creed was that he loved India not because he has had the chance of being born in her soil but because she had saved through tumultuous ages the living words that had issued from the illumined consciousness of her great sons, which spoke of *Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam* i.e., of All Truth, All Wisdom and Infinity. And unity ultimately meant *Shantam, Sivam, Advaitam* i.e., peace was in it, goodness was in it and it was the unity of all beings. In the vast ocean of life, everything merges and life in all its facets is divine in that sense, and its manifestations are the expressions of a cosmic yearning and will. Vedanta, interpreted in this way is not merely a bundle of dogmas, a medley of rituals or even a confession of faith or philosophy of life. In its ultimate analysis it means that behind the universe, there is oneness. We come to this conclusion rationally, we grope for stable ingredients behind the apparent, the evanescent, and seek a reconciliation not only in its higher spiritual stage but also in our everyday mundane affairs—a reconciliation and a revaluation, unconscious as well as conscious from the subconscious to the super conscious. How can we perceive change unless there is something changeless? The individualized soul is only a spark of a higher cosmic unity which we in India express by a symbol known as ‘*Brahma*’ or the Absolute Principle. It is not a created unity. It exists. It is the *elan vital*, the primordial creativity and is infinite in all dimensions and at all ends. The Vedantic

³ Swami Vivekananda’s Neo-Vedantism and its practical application by Prof. S. C. Chatterjee in Swami Vivekananda Centenary Volume, Page 28.

approach is, therefore, not like a Christian, Hebrew or Islamic approach which posits creation by a supra-personal entity called God. Vedanta says—we are Gods—we were unmanifest, now we are manifest. The Finite is only an expression of the Infinite. Here curiously enough, three of our neo-Vedantins, Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo meet on the same platform, though they differ in details regarding the approach. Behind these three forceful personalities were arrayed a galaxy of gallants, two of whom we must name Rammohun and Ramakrishna. One tried to understand the problem from an intellectual and objective plane, the other from an intuitive and subjective angle. Both generated social forces. The impact from the West, its science and technology, its rational evaluation and its sense of worldliness helped to give that exact touch of realism in our affairs, which we had lacked. Swami Dayananda of Arya Samaj, Swami Narayanswami of Gujarat, Mahatma Ramalingam of Madras, S. J. Bejoykrishna Goswami, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Kesab Chandra Sen of Bengal, all, each in their own way, helped to develop a new awakening which the Nineteenth Century in India presaged and the Twentieth Century tried to absorb. But two world wars again shattered the beautiful mosaic which was being built up and there was a crack in our ideology which is hard to repair or resolve. Generation Gaps intervened and a sense of alienation ruled. In the Nineteenth Century, God was dying and the intellectuals and thinkers all over the world were trying to resurrect Him in Man. A new radiant humanism with or without spiritual strings, call it Jiva, Siva or Divinity in Humanity or Humanity in Divinity, was supposed to be the complete answer. Man became God and God became Man. Today, Man's death-pangs are already evident. He is being replaced by robots, automatons and electronic devices. The sense of a liberal humanism is being shattered by higher technological developments at an almost breakneck speed. In the Nineteenth Century inhumanity meant



cruelty, in the Twentieth it means schizoid self-alienation. True enough, robots do not rebel except at a particular man's behest but that the forces so collected and arranged may become engines of destruction to escape the boredom of an meaningless life. As Dr. Radhakrishnan points out—Man is a teachable animal and by a sympathetic understanding of the past gropings and stumblings of mankind, he can avoid if not error, at least its repetition.

An eminent scientist of Cybernetics, Prof. Frank George, said the other day that what we need today is a complete theory of communication and control. "If a God does not exist, we must invent Him". Many people have made such observations including Voltaire. The answer lies in making this invention a radiant discovery, and in the imagination, creativeness, and the conscious ability of man. The emotional world, which speaks of beauty, love and affection, still lives in the sub-conscious as vital urges of human behaviour inspite of brain-washing and conduct control. They still act as main-springs of action. This is still the hope of an automated society. It is this consciousness which is effective, called it religion or not. It may not mean the old conventional way, because what we mean by religion or to be more correct, spiritual values, is bound to vary according to the person one is and in the environment he lives. But the sense of the supra-sensual and supra-conscious is bound to remain. And this realization is of all times and all ages. True Vedanta is pitched on that.

IV

In India problems of philosophy and religion are not different and have occupied for centuries an important place in the social concept. As Radhakrishnan says 'while the leaders of philosophy have attempted to solve the riddle of existence the teachers of religion have sought to supply us with an

ordered scheme of life.' The story of Indian thought gives us an important chapter, in what Lessing calls, the education of the human race. What is note-worthy is not the painful ignorance natural to a world over which generations of wild men have swept but the attempt to rise out of that ignorance. The greatness of the ancient thinkers of India is that they struggled persistently and often successfully to discover the spiritual values which enlarge the mind and add to the beauty of life. The progress of Man, it is generally admitted today, is a continuous victory of thought over passion, of tolerance over fanaticism, of persuasion over force. That is as much a social aim as any humanism, scientific, philanthropic or radical.

The Vedanta is the product of a fearless quest of truth by minds which were undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease as Max Muller puts it. This search was to be thoroughly objective and detached, freed from the moods and predilections of personality. By Vedas no books are meant said Swami Vivekananda in his address to the Parliament of Religions in September 1893—Truth in one, sages call it by different names.

Another teaching of Vedanta was the innate divinity of Man—Divinity struggling for expression, manifestation,—evolution through psycho-physical organisation through unity in diversity.

The resultant goal of life was the spiritual realization which in essence meant a better flowering of the Divine within, a fuller manifestation, in life and conduct. Every one of our great intellectuals felt however that to attain this goal one must have food and clothing, shelter and security not as ends in themselves but a means for the fullest development of Man. They spiritualized these secular ideas, each in his way and they all acknowledged that Vedanta's most

Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedantism and its practical application by Prof. S. C. Chatterjee in Swami Vivekananda Centenary Volume 28.



brilliant exposition was first in the Upanishads and then in Bhagabad Gita through the three-fold path of *Jnana*, *Karma* and *Bhakti*, and its later rational formulations as in Shankara or others. Buddhist and Jaina doctrines and even Ajivaka and other cults raised a standard of revolt against dogmatised ritualism but they gave fresh notice of Man as an end in Himself. In recent times, Rammohun's eagerness was to propound a '*Vedanta pratipadya Dharma*' based on monism. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tried to put it on the pedestal of an universal approach where all paths converged and service of Man became the worship of God. Rabindranath's concern was to develop a sense of pervasive beauty through a synoptic and intuitive approach and which culminated in Sri Aurobindo as a supramental realization. To both Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath, the world was not an illusion or '*Maya*' but a divine truth, giving the clue to the riddle of the world.

It reminds me of Paul Braunton's words which typifies the modern mind. 'I am a believer in most of the great faiths accordings to the interpretation which I hold their own founders gave to them. I am a Christian to the extent that I concur with Saint Paul in saying 'And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all the mysteries and all knowledge and have not love, I am nothing.' I am a Buddhist to the extent that I realise with Gautama that only when a man forsakes all his desires, is he really free. I am a Jew to the extent I believe profoundly in the saying 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one.' I am a Hindu to the extent of believing and practising the science of Yoga (action in non-action), the science of union with ultimate reality. I am a Mahomedan to the extent that I rely on Allah above all else. And finally I am a follower of Lao-Tse to the extent that I accept his perception of the strange paradoxes of life. But I will go no further into these faiths than the points indicated. They are the boundary posts at which I turn back. I will not walk with Christian into an

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exaltation of Jesus—whom I love most deeply than many of them...I will not walk with the Buddhists into a denial of the beauty and pleasures which existence holds for me : I will not walk with the Jews into a narrow shackling of the mind to superficial observances. I will not walk with the Hindu into a supine fatalism which denies the innate divine strength in Man. I will not walk with the Mahomedans into a single book, though the most sacred it may be and I will not walk with the Chinese Taoists into a system of superstitious mummery which mocks the great man it is supposed to honour. I do not believe that God has given a monopoly of Truth to us. The sun is for all alike.'

Call it catholicity or call it eclecticism, Rammohun's view was almost similar—'Christians like Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson have studied the Hindu Shastras and he has not become a Hindu. I myself have read the Koran again and again. Has that made me a Mahomedan ? I have studied the whole Bible. You know I am not a Christian. Why then you fear to read it ? Read it and judge it for yourselves.'

सब साँच मिलै सो साँच है
न मिलै स भुट (रज्जव)

Truth is what mixes with truth. All else is untruth. Rammohun fought more against the idolatry of mind than of the image—सत्यकामः सत्यसंकल्पः मीहन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञसितव्यः Though the movement which Rammohun preached and which I call a phase of Neo-Vedantic universalism, was confined mainly to the intellectual classes and veered from deism to

Science and the Crisis in Society—Frank H. George

Three Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy p 39 by Max Muller

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda vol I pp 4-5

The Appeal of Vedanta to Modern Man—Swami Ranganathanada in Prabuddha Bharat vol 67 (1962) p 253.

A reference to Sri Aurobindo's the Riddle of the World by Shri Krishna Prem in Dilip Kumar Roy's life of Shri Krishnaprem (Appendix.)



theism, the fundamentals it preached, the aspirations it brought about, the inspiration it gave, the unity in the outlook it forged became great assets in national life. Decades after, it bloomed into a practical Vedanta in Vivekananda through the magic touch of one who had not merely preached but practised it in spiritual life. That was the story of the 19th century Bengal which extended for its logical realization to the first few decades, of the 20th and produced the synthesis of Rabindranth, Sri Aurobindo and others. Social causes became spiritual causes. Life was one integral whole.

V

In any study of the Nineteenth Century from any point of view, Raja Rammohun Roy's contribution has to be studied dispassionately. In the long and picturesque procession of modern India's emergence as an important member of the present-day world community, his is the first name to be taken into account. Our estimate should not however be a mere adulation in a subjective setting but an objective and critical appreciation. Rammohun, it is admitted on all hands, was anxious to rouse his countrymen from their mental lethargy by introducing among them the liberal ideas of the West. He considered the 'enlightenment of the people' to be a measure conducive to the stability of Government. He felt that discriminating allegiance of the educated was much more valuable than the apathetic subservience of the ignorant. It may be correct that Rammohun Roy, Prasanna Kumar Tagore and other leaders were more enamoured of the Western civilisation and looked upon the British as deliverers than conquerors. They even tried to rear up an European colony here. Dr. R. C. Majumdar quotes* a passage from Prasanna Kumar Tagore's

* Presidency College Alumni Association Autumn Annual vol VII 1967.

writings—‘If we were to be asked what Government we would prefer, English or any other, we would one and all reply ‘English by all means, by even in preference to Hindu Government’ which shows how the atmosphere of the educated elite was tinged. Yet the spirit of the new age was typified in young Bengal, mostly students of the Hindu College who drew inspiration not only from Derozio but from Voltaire, Locke, Bacon, Hume, Tom Paine and others. It is stated that when Tom Paine’s ‘Age of Reason’ was advertised for sale at one rupee per copy, the demand for the book among the Hindu College students was so great that it was sold at Rs. 5/- and it was also translated into Bengali. Derozio and later Principal Richardson had unflinching faith in the French Revolution and English Radicalism and drew the senior boys like Kashi Prasad Ghosh, Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee, Tarachand Chakraborty like magnets though Associations like ‘Society for the acquisition of General knowledge’ and “The Hindu Theo-Philanthropic Society.” They discussed not only questions of free will and female education, celebrated the July revolution of 1830, talked about superstition and priestcraft but later turned it according to Richardson into a ‘den of prison.’ This happened in a meeting dated 8.2.1843 which is significant for more reasons than one. Tarachand Chakravorty (1804-1855) had the courage to rise and say that Captain Richardson had scented in the debate some stricture on British rule and protested saying “Captain Richardson, with due respect I must say that I consider your conduct as an insult to the society and if you do not retract what you have said we shall represent the matter to the committee of the Hindu College and if necessary to the Government itself.” Dr. Majumdar also refers to a pet plan of Raja Rammohun of establishing an European Colony in India and to a protest made in a paper read before the Hindu Literary Society and published in the India Gazette of 12th February 1830. We all know that the Hindu College was founded in 1817 for “giving a liberal education to the

children of the members of the Hindu community." The fact has to be noted that it was to be a liberal and not merely English education and was to be confined to the Hindus. Dr. N. K. Sinha, an eminent historian of repute has referred to them as "Brahmins and Banias," "Sons of Dewans and brothers of clerks." The history behind separating the school and the college courses and the renaming of it as Presidency College and the fees prescribed clearly show that the original idea of Hindu College Managers expressed to Government in 1824 that "The admission of persons likely to injure the respectability and consequently to contract the utility of the college will always be strictly prohibited" was still active.*

The claim that the slow evolution of a compact Indian national sense and as its corollary the demand of the right of self-determination were the direct results of the British contact are now being contested by many. They contend that Sir Jadunath Sarkar and others who propound this theory have misread the signs of history. Even Rabindranath's views have been quoted.

It has been emphasised that "one result of the aristocratic monopoly on learning has been an inevitable distortion of history. The records of the past which reflect

* It has been asserted that Rammohun "had no share in the foundation of the Hindu College" and it is correct up to a point. If Rajnarain Bose, who was one of the earliest pupils of the Hindu College and a direct disciple of David Hare, has to be believed (Vide Pages 4-5 of his *History of the Hindu or Presidency College*—M. C. Sarkar and Sons Pvt. Ltd.), both Hare and Rammohun had jointly mooted the idea of a like school before 1817. In that sense it was their 'brain-child' but it did not materialise. The proposal was taken up by S. J. Baidyanath Mookherjee who got Sir Edward Hyde East interested in the matter. Please also see *Calcutta Gazette* July 4, 1816. Even in 1830, Hare's claim to be one of the founders of the College was seriously contested in letters to the *Calcutta Gazette* by a Director of the College (Extracts 1824-1934, Published by the Government of W. Bengal). Rammohun wanted (Vide his historic letter to Lord Amherst 1823) 'European gentlemen of talents and education to instruct useful sciences.'

chiefly the interests of the upper classes give only an incidental or indirect view of the life of the masses, the everyday business of hewing and hauling."

It has also been stated that "an impartial and scientific attitude towards history is not older than the Nineteenth Century." From Xenophon's memoirs of Socrates through Cicero and till the father of the modern French history, Andre Den Schesne (1584—1640), history remained a biased chronicle of events, kings, priests and generals. Even with the Carlyle and Hegel there were assertions of some ideals than their assertion in the logical process of evolution. The concept of history as conditioned by economic causes came later.

Rammohun Roy, though according to some an over-valued idol, may be called the First of the Founding Fathers of Modern India, the first Reform leader of his time who had deeply thought of man outside the bounds of his creed or colour based on the study of the science of comparative religion. Though he was born in an orthodox Hindu family (1772), just a century earlier than Sri Aurobindo, he had according to the then usage studied Persian and Arabic and knew of the teachings of Koran as well. He was as much at home in Euclid and Aristotle, Plotinus and Plato, the philosophy of the *Sufis* and the rationalism of the *Mutazilas*. He had travelled in Tibet, had seen Tantrik Buddhism at work, studied Sanskrit in Benares and wrote a treatise '*Tufhat-ul-Muhawuddin*' (A gift to Monotheists) in Persian with an introduction in Arabic. He was the Dewan of John Digby, collector of Rangpoor from 1809 to 1814 and during this period came into contact with Hariharananda Tirthaswami, an erudite Tantrik scholar which considerably influenced his religious leanings. As a matter of fact it were the texts of the Mahanirvana Tantra (or the Tantra of the great Vehicle, as Sir John Woodroffe or Arthur Avalon as he styled himself, puts it) were the sources of many exquisite prayers taken in Brahmadharma catechism. There is evidence that Rammohun Roy was also a deep student of the Jaina shastras e.g. Kalpasutra. At the time he was wiht

Digby, he had access to the journals and books that used to be shipped to him from abroad and Rammohun caught the neo-liberal rationalist instincts of the then Europe. The tenets of the American and French Revolutions had stirred him also. He later took up residence in Calcutta and founded *Atmiya Sabha* and published Vedanta grantha in Bengali and wrote 'Abridgment of the Vedanta or Vedantasar', translated the Upanishads such as Kena, Isha, Mandukya and published them not merely in Bengali but also in English and some in Hindusthani also. It was evident that here was a man who was far in advance of his age. Though it had been asserted that Rammohun's interest in the Abolition of the Suttee movement had waned considerably in the years that followed 1818 the year of his first treatise on Suttee and historians also correctly point out that in a letter to Lord William Bentinck he had even given expression to that sentiment, it would perhaps be not stating the whole truth if we say that he was not one of the pioneers of the movement.* It was as much an age of uncertainty as well as an age of polemics. The moon was reflected in the mirror. At the sametime he was known as the "Zoburdust Maulavi." He had in 1827 edited and published the Sanskrit work of '*Bajrasuchi*' of Mritunjoy, a treatise directed against the institution of caste. As a journalist he is known for his *Mirhat-ul-Akbar*, *Sambad Kaumudi*, his advocacy of Buckingham, his persecution in the Supreme Court along with Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. A contemporary paper 'Madras

* Though Regulation 17 prohibiting Suttee practice and self-immolation was passed in 1829, the idea had germinated as early as 1781. From the extracts of Calcutta Gazette of 16th January 1830, we find that several addresses were presented to Lord William Bentinck and it is stated that Babu Rammohun Roy took prominent part in it, along with Dwaraka Nath Bhakoor and Rai Kalinath Chowdhury.

The Days of John Company—Selections from the Calcutta Gazette 1824-1832—West Bengal Government Press, Calcutta.

Courier' speaks of him as a discoverer and a reformer. His contact with the then French Thought is well known. People say that Calcutta was within the earshot of Chandernagore which was then it is said a nest of democrats and Jacobins.

Intellectually equipped as he was, his main passion in life was to prove the unity of God. The precepts of Jesus—the Guide to Peace and Happiness, his first, second and final Appeals to the Christian public in Brahamanical magazine writing under the pseudonym of Shiva Prasad Sharma show how his sole aim was to separate the spiritual and ethical teachings of Hindusim, Islam, Buddhism and Chritianity from the dogmas and gluts that grew round them. He gave reasons why the doctrine of Trinity and Atonement could not be accepted by him but he never doubted that the teachings of Christ have a Universal message for mankind. His point was—'May God render religion destructive of difference and dislike between man and man conducive to the peace and union of mankind.' This was just the spark for the growth of a doctrine of universal humanism and the seed for the development of a science of comparative religion.

Dr. Brojendranath Seal pointed out, 'At the time when the Rajah flourished, thrée cultures, so to say, were at work—the Brahiminical, the Islamic and the Western and the great question which Rammohun had the genius to foresee was how to find a rapport, of concord and of unity. The origin of Modern India lay there.' It is said he is born to serve but a few who thinks only of his own age. He was a champion of the cause of women, a social reformer, a pioneer promoter of English Education, one of the prime movers in the founding of the Hindu College, a friend of Bentham and Macaulay. His fight for a Free Press, for the suppression of the Suttee are well known. His interest in two newspapers *Sambad Kaumudi* and *Mirát-ur Akhbar* show him as an active journalist. His

love of liberty is typified in his visit off the Cape of Good Hope to a French ship to salute the glorious tricolour flag of France and his passionate exclamation 'Glory, glory to France.' It seems that like Jefferson he swore upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man. It reveals the man when we read the account of the dinner which the Directors of the East India Company gave in his honour touching nothing but rice and cold water. It is also interesting to note what Jeremy Bentham wrote of him—'Your works are made known to me by a book in which I read a style which but for the name of a Hindu I should certainly have ascribed to the pen of a superiorly educated and instructed Englishman.' He had studied not only the Vedas and the Upanisads but Jaina and Buddhist scriptures. The Tantrik philosophy of *Mukti* through *Bhukti*, of liberation through enjoyment and sublimation of our sense experiences, appealed to him. The body to him was the temple of the spirit, the apparatus for spiritual growth. He did not regard the body or any part of it as indecent or vile nor as cheap or vulgar. Love to him was spiritual and aesthetic, a matter of conscience and good taste and not one of law or codes. He even advocated Saiva marriage. Rammohun's teachings on Christianity and Vedanta had reached America, where Thoreau and the Transcendentalists received them with alacrity. New England was then passing through a crisis of spiritual renaissance and intoxicating idealism. Thoreau was lecturing at Harvard on Atman (1838). Boston Brahmins (not the Lowells and the Cabots) were thinking of a joint bible with Ex-orientale Lux. The Salem-frigate which had made a voyage to India for as many as twenty one times had created bridges of understanding. Ramdulal Dey, the commercial magnate of those days had been presented with a portrait of George Washington painted by Stuart, an eminent artist, by his American friends. Only the other day, we heard Rolland speaking—'Heir of George Washington and Abraham

Lincoln, take up the causes not of a party, not of a single people but all. Summon the representatives of the peoples to the Congress of Mankind. Speak, speak to all. The world hungers for a voice which will overleap the frontier of nations and classes." The impact of Christain thought was not merely fruitful negatively but had a positive aspect too. The process of reabsorption not only enriched its own thought but in return gave us some thing also. The treasures of Ormuz and Ind were not the only gifts to be collected. A Schopenhauer, a Max Muller, a Whitney, a Paul Deussen, a Jacobi, a Walt Whitman, an Emerson and later a Winternitz, a Rolland or a Christopher Isherwood or a Aldous Huxley or a Somerset Maughm and the many Indologists, whether in England, France, Germany, Russia or America gave us new interpretations and new ways of looking at Indian life and society, its arts and letters.

As one goes through the life history of this remarkable man who was, so to say a pioneer in this respect, one cannot but be impressed with its versatile character, its universal appeal and an active humanism. Truly it may be said of him in the words of the Vedic poet *Madhuchhanda* that he typified the realization of great purpose through a dynamic personality (महान अभिष्टिरोजसा) Rabindranath had summed up thus. 'Through the dynamic power of his personality, his uncompromising freedom of the spirit, he vitalized our national being with the urgency of creative endeavour. He tackled an amazingly wide range of social, religious and cultural problems.'

Rammohun's interpretation of Vedanta brought him to a standpoint which he used to term as Universal Religion. In his Translation of Abridgement of the Vedant published in 1816 he wrote in the preface 'By taking the path which conscience and sincereity direct, I born a Brahmin had exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches even of my relations, whose prejudices are strong and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. In the English works of Rajah Rammohun Roy p. 22 it is stated "An attentive perusal of this

(Mundakopanishad) as well as the remaining books of the Vedanta will I trust convince every unprejudiced mind, that they, with great consistency include the unity of God instructing men, at the same time, in the pure mode of adoring him in spirit."

As a matter of fact his biographer Nagendranath Chatterjee and others thought that Islamic monotheism, Upanishadic Brahmad and the Sufi doctrines of Love impregnated with a Tantrik leaven from Hariharananda Shastri plus an indoctrination by Christian thought and faith made him inculcate a sort of universalism which he called Vedanta but he was not a Vedantin whole hogger. We had to wait for Vivekananda to bring an applied Vedanta to life so that it could become not only a spiritual—aesthetic—intellectual and religious code with a practical social approach also, and would bring the Vedanta of the forest to our hearths and homes.

Rammohun wrote to Digby in 1828—I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. The distinction of castes introducing innumerable divisions among them has entirely deprived them of political feeling.....It is I think necessary that some changes should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort.

This did not mean that though in Rammohun's and later in Vidyasagar's days, Vedanta was not the direct inspiration of social reforms, the reinterpretation and reorientation of the texts still formed the mainspring of social action. Both Rammohun and Vidyasagar quoted Shastric texts and referred to their contexts.

VI

It may be stated that there could be no dearer adherent to the doctrine or 'Egalite,' 'Liberte' and 'Fraternite' or of Bacon

and Hume, of Locke and Rousseau than Rammohun. Cosmopolitan and Universal as he was, he was a man who could see beyond in a grand sweep. Intellectually thus equipped, he was not only a representative man, but a man far in advance of his contemporaries not only as a social reformer, not only as a moral preceptor, not only as a fighter for the freedom of the press or the Abolition of the Suttee, but as a man who believed in fundamentals. The symbol of that unity was to him none but the One—'the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being.' This unitarian thesis led him to the precepts of Jesus and his repeated appeals to the Christian public were not merely to separate the essence from the dogmas and cults that have arisen but to find solace in an Universal message which no true Christian, Hindu or Muslim could repudiate.

While most of the mundane problems which Rammohun had to face, tackle or champion have lost their outward urgency and are not live issues today the mind that could grapple all those must be considered amazing one and teach in that vigilance is the eternal price of any advancement worth its name. To lean on one's oars is the first fallacy that leads to stagnation in the national life. It may amuse us to day to read the heated polemics about Orientalists or Anglicists or his petition against the Jury Act or on the settlement of Europeans in India but they show an alert mind at work. Our emphasis to day should be more on Rammohun the social and political man than on Rammohan, the founder of the Brahma creed. The Brahma Samaj and the movement it typified and the subsequent phases through which it passed was a multi-pronged one and served a historic demand at a critical period of India's history and even if there is a touch of ecelecticism, history cannot ignore it with a nod. A point incidentally which perhaps could be made more specific and which does not in any way detract from the glory which is Rammohun's but enhances it

is, that Rammohun was not actually the founder of a theistic Church (Samaj) in the sense that Maharshi Debendranath did. He was of course morally responsible for creating a viable atmosphere by establishing a Brahma 'Sabha', the trust deed of which is one of the most remarkable documents in the history of our land. To quote Rabindranath's words it did not visualize a sectarian creed but a clarion call to all. The poet's words were 'Rammohun came to his countrymen as an unwelcome accident stupendously out of proportion to his surroundings and yet he was the man for whom our history has been watching through the night. The vision of the modern age with its multitude of claims and activities shone clear before his mind's eye and it was he who truly introduced it to his country before that age itself found its own mind.'

The story of the evolution of the Brahma Samaj and whether it stood as an attempt of the body social against the onslaught, of Christian penetration and as an antibody to stem the tide of proselytisation may be looked at from the point of view of the historic necessity of the situation.

It is wrong to assume that Rammohun did establish a rival sect or Church in Brahma Samaj. As a matter of fact he had not established a seperate church at all. It was at first a theistic association of Unitarians of any creed and we read from a letter addressed to R. Dutta by Rev. William Adams that its present members (1827) were Theodore Dickens a barrister, George James Gordon a merchant, William Tate, an attorney, B. W. Mcleod—a surgeon in the Company's service, Norman Kerr, Dwarkanath Thakoor, Prasanna Kumar Thakoor, Radhaprasad Roy and himself. In 1828, on 20th August was inaugurated the Brahma Sabha at 48 Chitpore Road in a house rented from Ramkamal Bose. Tarachand Chakravorty was the first secretary. It shifted to its own house in 1830 and the trust deed is a remarkable document.....It is stipulated that the trustees shall behave and conduct themselves in an

orderly, sober, religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the Universe..... and no object animate or inanimate shall be recognised as an object of worship.

But the trust deed as Sri Soumendranath Tagore correctly points out does not contemplate Brahma Sabha as the institution of a new religious sect. It was open to all—Hindus, Moslems, Christians. 'Tattwabodini' Patrika refers to these many times. It was Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, long after the death of Rammohun, who changed silently the character of the Brahma Sabha and made it into a sectarian organisation in the light of the religion based on Vedanta and Brahma Dharma, compiled from Shastric texts chosen by Maharshi.

The history of the Brahma Samaj thereafter was the story of its guidance by Debendranath—who was ironically called the Pope of the Brahma Samaj and gradually made it into a doctrinaire sect of protestants of the Hindu faith.

Mahanirvan Tantra furnished the mantra for initiation. Gradually 'Brahmadharmer Anusthan Paddhati' grew up into a ritual. It went a great way towards strengthening the cohesion of the Brahmas who were now (i.e. in the mid fifties and sixties of the last Century) a definite closely knit social organisation preaching montheism, social service and reforms.

The next phase of the development centres round Keshab Chandra Sen. He was the first non-Brahmo Acharya with an apostolic zeal. Sivanath Sastri* refers to the silent controversy that was brewing between Adi Brahma Samaj where Maharshi wanted to confine his spiritual solace more to the Upanishads mainly while the younger section headed by Keshab wanted to broaden the basis of Brahmoism by advocating new social ideas by application of so called light of reason to fundamental articles

* History of Brahoism—Sivanath Sastri.

of religious belief. More over the Gospel of Christ had an irresistible appeal for Kesab. He was also an admirer of Paramahansa Ramakrishnadeva with whom his acquaintance started from 1875. Ultimately with Coochbehar marriage there was another Schism and Kesab's overwhelming Bhakti and mysticism made him the founder of the 'Naba Bidhan sect.' Maharshi and Rajnarain Bose blessed both the organisations, Sadharan and Nababidhan.

A famous missionary of the Church Missionary Society founded in 1799 was Revo. Long. Daniel Corrie at Mirzapur was another. The name of Haberlin also stands conspicuous. The mission at Thakurpukur and the Bible Society through Buchanan and Brown helped in the translation of the Christian scriptures. There was another society about which we must make a big acknowledgement and that is of Scottish Missionary Society made famous by the Association of Dr. Duff.

The Baptist Mission and the American Baptists, the Oxford Mission Society, though late in the field, also did great work. It is however a fact that throughout the 19th century the missionary activities were in a sense challenge to the whole apparatus of Hindu way of life and social organisation. Revo Lalbehari Dey's 'Alexander Duff' shows how he had been charged by the committee of foreign missionaries in Scotland to found a College in Bengal to be conducted on thoroughly Christian principles. The General Assembly's Institution was founded on 13th July 1830. There had already been a moral and religious ferment due to the impact of Western thought and ideas and disciples were already talking of Bacon and Locke, Hume and Berkeley, of Bentham and Tom Paine. The danger was all the more that unlike Islam it was not a proselytizing agency through state help directly and relied upon monastic agencies and private conscience to do the needful. Debates, discussions and lectures on Christian theology became the most usual feature of the

public life of Bengal and naturally the impact was terrific and too prolonged. The educated middle and upper classes were in ferment. The lower classes and Adibasis were converted. The mental climate for social reforms was not merely the work of Brahma Samaj or of the progressivists like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar but also indirectly and directly due to Chrisrian infiltration which promised a higher standard of life, better education, better social conscience. The missionaries also contributed to the urge for social reform. The secular progressive activities of the missionaries are often lost sight of. It was Revo Long who was prosecuted for 'Nil Darpan' by the European Indigo Planters Association.

Lectures on Christianity by Dr. Duff, by Mr. Adam, Mr. Hill, Mr. Dealtry were eagerly listened to. Revd Krishnamohan Banerjee, Lalbehari De, Michael Madhusudan became famous overnight. Feringhi Kaimal Bose was a name to quote. The Hindus, and the Anglicans fought. Rammohun had introduced Lord's Prajer to be recited every morning to his school.

It seems probable that Raja Rammohan, as well as Radhakanto Deb and even David Hare, not to speak of Debendranath Tagore, were getting alarmed at the missionaries' activities in the late thirties and early fourties of the last Century but it was Debendranath who through his '*Tattwa Bodhini*' gave articulate expression to an attempt to counteract the tendency. His decision to convert Rammohun's 'Brahma Sabha' into a 'Samaj' and make it a separate Church was perhaps dictated by a fear complex as well as by drawing home to the Young Bengal about the richness of their cultural heritage which they need not abjure. This was also the result of an overtone of a national sentiment and pride in the past. Even a Christian like Lalbehari De was one of the foremost of the nationalist pioneers, his spiritual affiliation with Christianity notwithstanding. Madhusudan Dutta was another shining

example (His Ode to Motherland). Revd. K. M. Banerjee did a herculian work on Mahabharat. The desirability of organising a national Christian Church without the trouble of a foregin collaboration seemed to have captured the imagination of these men. Earlier the Derozians had voted, solidly for Bacon and Locke, Tom Paine and Rousseau, Bentham and Mill without caring to know what India had to offer.

Later the swing of the pendulum was on the other extreme. Even men nurtured on Western thought and culture, tried to get there own Eastern heritage and there was a conscious attempt for readaptation. That is what Bankim, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and others tried to do. Through a sort of militant Hindu nationalism which the British wanted to courteract by rallying the Moderates (who were mostly in sympathy with western ideologies, tastes, and behaviour patterns) along with the Muslims.

Rammohun's biographer Miss Collet said that Islamic faith had also a great influence on him. His Tuhfal-ul-Muwahhidin—a gift to Mono-theists amply proves it. Christianity also appealed to his versatile mind. He had the courage to publish a work called 'The precepts of Jesus, a guide to Peace and Happiness', which called for hostile criticism from the very followers of Jesus. He also belonged for a time to an unitarian society (1826). Finally in 1828 he founded the 'Brahma Sabha'. It was not merely to have a spiritual regeneration or realization of one's own self but to quote his words 'to encourage charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious personalities and creeds'. Here was born what we may loosely call 'Practical Vedanta' which though at the time it looked more like an eclectic creed, became rejuvenated in Vivekananda's hands as a gospel.*

* The Extremist Challenge—Prof. Amalesh Tripathi.
Vedanta and the West—P-193

It even reconciled a personal God with a belief in impersonal faith. As Swami Pabitananda puts it, that it is simply 'the reading of the impersonal God through our own intellect and emotions'. In man there is always a higher level—a divinity—higher than the physical and even the mental, beyond the material comforts. In modern terms what we call a value sense—why do we develop virtues or a high degree of unselfishness? why does a mother willingly suffer for her children, a husband for his wife—because we want to realize something within and beyond us as a fact. There exists a scale, a hierarchy of values, ranging from simple physical comforts up to the highest satisfaction of love, aesthetic enjoyment, creative achievement. Scientist may think that they are not absolute or transcendental in the sense of being vouchsafed by some external power or divinity but they are waiting in one to be developed. That is Life. There is a passage in the Upanishad translated by Swami Vivekananda, who was very fond of it "In this world of evanescence, one who finds Him who never changes, in this world of death, one who finds Him who is life itself, in this world of manifoldness one who finds oneness, who realizes this oneness in his heart of hearts, to him belongs peace, eternal peace, unto none else, unto none else'.

Coming back to Rammohun, we may almost borrow the words of Sri Aurobindo—that is what he told about another great son of Bengal Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. In an article of 'Vande Mataram' in 1907 he states "The Rishi is different from the saint. His life may not have been distinguished by superior holiness, nor his character by an ideal beauty. He was not great by what he was himself but by what he has expressed. A great and vivifying message had to be given'.



VII

The history of the growth of Christianity in India has had an interesting epilogue as well as prologue also. The epilogue dates back to the almost immediate disciples of Christ e.g.—St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew. The apostolic tradition, even if historically correct, does not seem to have changed the course of events in India except at its southernmost corner. Hindu life flowed as usual from land's end to end and from sea to sea. The Brahmins thought, the Kshatriyas fought, the Vaisyas traded and the Sudras served. The intrusion of the Syrian Church in the South did not very much alter the contour or context of Indian history, its life and culture, its spiritual quest or socio-religious zest, even in her relation to foreign countries. The name of India finds a prominent place even before Alexander's invasion in the inscriptions of Cyrus the Great (558-530 B. C.) the empire builder of the Archaemenids or of Darius (517-509 B.C.) whose inscriptions (Persepolis and Nakhi-Rustim) speak of India along with Gandhara. Xerxes is also said to have employed Indian troops when he invaded Greece in 480 B.C. Centuries passed. The Portugeese, the Dutch, the Danes, the British, the French came.

As stated by George Mark Moraes in his book*—‘We have in the accounts of the Christian missionaries and laymen who sojourned in India the reactions of the European mind to the religious, social, and political ideas of the Indian people from the times of John of Monte Corvino to those of St. Francis Xavier’.

Later writers, such as Fernao Nuniz, the author of a valuable chronicle of the empire of Vijayanagar (1535-37), and Duarte Barbosa, one of the shrewdest observers that ever visited India, were greatly impressed by the resemblance of the Trimurti to

* George Mark Moraes—A History of Christianity in India.

the Trinity. 'These Brahmans', wrote Barbosa, "greatly honour the number trine : they hold that there is a God in three persons, and who is not more than one. All the prayers and ceremonies are in honour of the Trinity, and they, so to say, figure it in their rites, and the name by which they call it is this, Barmo (Brahma), Besnu (Visnu), Maycereni (Mahesvara)'.

It is of interest, however, to note that there is little in common between the Christian conception of God and the Hindu notion of the Supreme Being. The first character of God, as understood from the Jewish and the Christian revelation, is His unicity : "Hear Oh Israel : the Lord our God is one Lord", from which it follows 'that there is an infinite metaphysical chasm between 'Him who is' and ourselves, a chasm which separates the complete self-sufficiency of His own existence from the intrinsic lack of necessity of our own existence'. Nothing can bridge such a chasm save a free act of the divine will. This act is the *creato ex nihilo*. Now, in the Hindu idea of the Supreme Being there is no such chasm between this Being and other beings, which are co-eternal with it and commonly independent of it. The difference between it and the latter is one of degree only and not of kind or order, as in the Christian conception.

When the King of Portugal sent out his men on the quest of the sea-route to the Indies, one of his most urgent instructions to these explorers was that they should diligently search for Christians in all those remote regions lying on their route. How profoundly the religious aspects of their mission inspired these pioneers is evident from the instinctive reply of the very first Portuguese whom on reaching Calicut, Vasco-da-Gama sent ashore on August 21, 1498, was angrily interrogated by the Muslims. Why do you come, who are you ?

'Al diablo que to doo ! Quen te traxo aca ?'

He answered that they had come to seek Christians and spices : *'Vimos buscar cristaos e especiaria.'*



Vasco da Gama was, therefore, pleasantly surprised when, on his route to India, he was greeted at Melinda, on the east coast of Africa, with a salute of guns from fourships riding at anchor at this port, and was joyfully accosted with the beloved words 'Christe ! Christe !' These ships belonged to Indian Christians (Christãos da India) who could have been none other than the Indian decendents of the followers St. Thomas, who had initiated them into the Christian faith. They were carriers of over-seas trade in those days along with the Muslims. They must have rejoiced at the prospect of speedy restoration of communication with the Christian West, contact with which has been interrupted for centuries by *Kawait-i-Islam* lording it over the countries of the Middle East. They celebrated this historic meeting of the faithful with becoming *eclat*, the festivities being kept up in the true Indian style with display of fire works and booming of guns from the ships. These Christians, when they first came on board to pay their respects to the Commander, were shown a picture of our Lady with Jesus in her arms at the foot of the cross surrounded by the Apostles. At the sight of the picture they fell to the ground, and during the time that the fleet was there they came daily to say their prayers on boards, bringing spices as offering.

On reaching India, however, Vasco-da Gama would seem to have deliberately refrained from seeking out the Christians. He was disappointed at the cold reception he was accorded by the ruler of Calicut, the Zamorin and avoided any demonstration of fellow feeling towards his co-religionists for fear of rousing the suspicion of the powers that be against the Christian minority. But there was nothing to discourage Pedro Alvares Cabral, who headed the next Portuguese expedition to India in 1500, in his efforts for a rapprochement with the Syriam Christians. Driven from Calicut as a result of the hostility of the Zamorin, he had turned to the King of Cochin, the Zamorin's rival ; and, in the friendly atmosphere of this town, there was no need to observe any restraints. The Portuguese

freely fraternized with their Indian bretheren, and the relations between them grew so intimate that two of these Christians, Brother Matthias and Brother John, successfully prevailed on Cabral to take them to Portugal. They wanted to go on a pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem and then visit their patriarch at Antioch. Matthias died in Portugal, but John was able to proceed on his journey to Italy. At Venice he was lionized by the citizens who were curious to know some thing of Christianity reputed to have been planted by St. Thomas, the Apostle. The information which he supplied was incorporated by Fracan-Montalboddo in his book, now extremely rare, which he published in 1507 in Venetian Italian :

In conclusion Moraes sums up as follows—

The Muslims, who had also attained to a high position ; showed in this respect a better sense of brotherhood. The result was that the Christians had only added one more caste to the multiplicity of the Indian caste system. It is because Christianity became a caste that it could offer no challenge to the Hindu mind, which would have otherwise tried to steal its thunder by first trying to understand its principles and then incorpotate them into itself. Added to this was the difficulty of access to the Christian scriptures, as they were locked up in a difficult language. This is the reason why inquiring minds, like Sankaracharya and Ramanuja show no influence of Christian thought in their writings despite the fact that they were fully aware of Christians present in their midst.

When in the fourteenth century efforts were again made to carry the message of Christ to the Hindus, the Friars—Preachers, to whom this arduous task was entrusted by the great missionary Popes of the age, found it difficult to make headway against Islam which had firmly entrenched itself in the country with a vast net work of its own missions. Islam had, more over, the backing of the state, while in the absence of protection of political power, the Christian

Missionaries came to India only to suffer and die for Christ. And when in the course of the years it was found difficult to maintain the supply of priests, the missions had perforce to be abandoned.

The fact stands in bold relief that if Christianity survived at all during the 1500 years, it is because of the large-heartedness and spirit of tolerance of our Hindu brethren. Apart from the unique service to the community, which the Christians were in a position to render, it is a tribute to the sense of justice, fairness and magnanimity of the Hindus that they appreciated the loyalty and efficiency of the Christians and permitted them to rise to the highest posts in the State. Many of the old kings and princelings in Travancore north of Quilon and in Cochin, had Syrian Christian ministers (*Karyakkar*). The Ancheri Christian *Karyakkars* of Tekkumar Kings are still remembered and spoken of. The Christians also had a military organisation of their own, and a dynasty—the Viltiyarvattam, ruling near Cochin. The military title of Panikkar is still used by many Christian families.

The real impact of Christian thought, its theology and philosophy, its ideas and ideals came to be felt only in the early Nineteenth Century. The behaviour pattern of the missionaries on a somewhat static society was also a point to be studied. It is wrong to believe that they tried to convert only Hindus or Adibasis or Animists. The Muslims also came within their purview but their success was small. Conversion to Christianity was due to many reasons, social, economic, and intellectual. The lower castes considered it a status symbol and an immediate upgrading in social stratification. It helped them to hobnob with powers that were if not on equal terms atleast on less distant terms and provided an escape from rigid caste rules. Economic reasons were also very powerful. A microscopic minority had a genuine belief in the supremacy

of the dogmas preached. Saturday visits and Sunday sermons also attracted many. But the curious fact was that those who were so attracted, took it to be the symbolic spearhead of a cultural renaissance which they wanted to adopt in India, a sort of an opening to get in touch with western ideas, science, arts and letters. They were not only men like Derozio's disciples such as Tarachand Chakraborty, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Rasikmohan Mullick, Ramgopal Ghosh or Akshoykumar Dutt, who were the sponsors of the battle between Orientalists and Anglicists, but also men like Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Lalbehari De, Krishnamohan Banerjee, Vaswani, Sadhu Sundar Singh, Principal Rudra or Narayanburman Tilak, Kalicharan Banerjee, who though Christians never lost their authentic indigenous values.

Rammohun, Keshubchandra, Vivekananda, Rabindranath, Brojendra Seal, Gandhiji, were more admirers of Jesus than many ardent Christians born, baptised or converted. Ramram Basu's Bengali Hymns were popular. Rev. Krishnamohan Banerjee in his 'The Aryan Weakness' published in 1875 tried to claim Jehova as a Vedic God and referred to the Bhakti cult in *Narayaniayo* Chapter of Mahabharata. The Oriental Christ was the dream of Brahmananda Keshubchandra Sen and Rev. Pratap Mazumdar. The Hindu view of Christ was stressed not only by Swami Vivekananda and others of the Ramakrishna Mission like Swami Akhilananda but became almost an article of faith : Rabindranath's famous odes on Christ particularly the one when he went to see the passion play at Obbergaum, Germany, is enshrined as a great human document of world wide interest not only to us, but to all. The idea was sedulously preached, that with the fierce antagonism of

Dr. Biman Bihari Mazumdar—History of Indian Social and Political Ideas from Rammohun to Dayananda—Reference to Madras Journal entitled "The Indian Statesman"—Article on "India in Transition". September 29, 1880.



religions of Vishnu and Shiva, of Buddhists and Brahmanas, of Quoran and Shastras—the growth of a national sentiment has been next to impossible. The language, the tradition, and the instincts of the different races as different as those of Saxons and Celts and the fusion, if ever, it is accomplished, must be the growth of generations, even under the fostering hand of a dominant race. A democratic spirit is abroad—wholly foreign to the Hindu character; and though the cloud is at present no bigger than a man's hand, yet the day will come when the spirit must be either disciplined by a healthy political training or when it will break through all restraints and become as injurious to the prosperity of the country as the ravages of an army of mutineers'. The writer concluded with a remarkable prophecy—"What India may have to experience some day is the union of democratic restlessness with some new religion, the advent of another Buddha who shall give expression to the undefined yearnings of multitudes, preach down the tyranny of caste, heal the antagonism of ages and fuse the people into a nation.' Dr. Mazumdar thinks that Mahtma Gandhi filled this historic role in the fulfilment of age-long aspirations of Indian nationalism. While it is partially true that his movement might have filled up the bill up to a point, his predecessors of the 19th century cannot be dismissed with a nod. The role of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in the creation of a fusion of democratic restlessness with a new religion—more a credo of service and surrender to the higher values in life, cannot be ignored. Vivekananda's formulations of what he called 'Practical Vedanta, and its application to accepted facts of Indian Society not merely in theory or philosophic speculation or in spiritual realization but in active and actual participation created an electric atmosphere to give rise to seeds of national thought. The entire Revolutionary Movement which wanted liberation of India from the English yoke was inspired mainly by

Bankim-Vivekananda as by intellectuals from the West. † It is interesting to quote here, from Sri Aurobindo's Bhawani Mandir pamphlet 'for private circulation' only * written in 1905 and see what a tremendous influence Ramakrishna-Vivekananda had on it. 'What was the message', Sri Aurobindo explains 'that radiated from the personality of Ramkrishna Paramhansa? Who was it that formed the kernel of the eloquence with which the lion-like heart of Vivekananda sought to shake to world? It is this that in every one of these three hundred millions of men, from the Rajah on his throne, to the coolie at his labour, from the Brahmin absorbed in his *Sandhya*, to the Pariah, walking shunned of men, God Liveth. We are all gods and creators, because the energy of God is within us and all life is creation; not only the making of new forms is creation, but preservation is creation, destruction itself is creation. It rests with us what we shall create; for we are not, unless we choose, puppets dominated by Fate and Maya; we are facets and manifestations of Almighty Power. And he added that India must be reborn, because her rebirth was demanded by the future of the world and added that it was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagawan Ramakrishna came and Vivekananda preached'. We needed three things for this purpose. Bhakti—the temple of the Mother, Karma—a new order of Bramacharis and Jnana the great Message. Adoration was dead and ineffective unless it was transmuted into *Karma*. He writes 'We will therefore have a Math with a new order of *Karma Yogins* attached to the temple, men who have renounced all in order to work for the Mother. Some may, if they choose be complete Sannyasis, most will be Brahmacharis, who will return to the *Garhastashram* when their allotted work is finished but all must accept renunciation.Bhakti

† One has to read Bankim's Anandamath only for this prapuse.

* Life of Sri Aurobindo — A.B. Purain, pp. 76, 81, 86.

and *Karma* cannot be perfect and enduring unless they are based upon *Jnana*.what shall be the basis of their knowledge? What but the great '*So-ham*' the mighty formula of Vedanta the ancient gospel which has yet to reach the heart of the nation, the knowledge which when vivified by Karma and Bhakti delivers man out of all fear and all weakness. And he ends with a brilliant peroration—Come then, hearken to the call of the Mother. She is already in our hearts waiting to manifest Herself, waiting to be worshipped—inactive because the God in us is concealed by tamas, troubled by Her inactivity, sorrowful because Her children will not call on Her to help them. You who feel Her stirring within you, fling off the black veil of self, break down the imprisoning walls of indolence, help Her each as you feel impelled, with your bodies or with your intellect or with your speech or with your wealth or with your prayers and worship, each man according to his capacity. Draw not back'.

The influence of Bankim and Vivekananda are too prominent not to be noticed. He himself admitted that he used to hear constantly Vivekananda's voice speaking to him in his solitary meditation in the Alipore Jail for more than a fortnight 'Vivekananda came and gave me the knowledge of intuitive mentality. I had not the least idea about at that time.'

In our review of the impact of western thought on a comparatively static back ground and how it gave rise to a synthesis, not only in ideas but ideals as well, is best proved by an example which is self explanatory. Take the concept of freedom. Throughout the hundred years from Rammohun to Aurobindo, we have cried hoarse about freedom first and freedom second and freedom last. But what did we mean by freedom? Freedom from what, freedom for whom, what were its contents and the concepts round which it moved. Dr. Dennis Dalton quotes Sri Aurobindo and Vivekananda as representing both a good working definition as well as an indication of the conceptual correspondences

that surround it. There is no question that throughout the Nineteenth Century and the early Twentieth, the constant and consistent impact of Western ideas on the subject greatly coloured not only our imagination but our intellectual process of ratiocination. Sri Aurobindo wrote—By liberty we mean the freedom to obey the law of our being, to grow to our natural self-fulfilment, to find out naturally and freely our harmony with our environment. The dangers and disadvantages of liberty, the disorder, strife waste and confusion to which its wrong use leads, are indeed obvious. But they arise from the absence or defect of the sense of unity between individual and individual, between community and community, which pushes them to assert themselves at the expense of each other instead of growing by mutual help and interchange and to assert freedom for themselves in the very act of encroaching on the free development of their fellows. If a real, a spiritual and psychological unit were effectuated, liberty would have no perils or disadvantages ; for free individuals enarmoured of unity would be compelled by themselves by their own need to accommodate perfectly their own growth with the growth of their fellows and would not feel themselves complete except in the free growth of others. Because of our present imperfection and the ignorance of our mind and will, law and regimentation have to be called in to restrain and to compel from outside. The facile advantages of a strong law and compulsion are obvious, but equally great are the disadvantages. Such perfection as it succeeds in creating tends to be mechanical and even the order it imposes tends to be artificial and liable to break down if the yoke is loosened or the restraining grasp withdrawn. Carried too far, an imposed order discourages the principle of natural growth which is

St. Antony's Papers. Number 18 South Asian Affairs. Number Two The movement for National Freedom in India Edited by S. N. Mukherjee Oxford University Press p 35.



the true method of life and may even stay the capacity for real growth. We repress and over-standardize life at our peril; by over regimentation we crush Nature's initiative and habit of intuitive self-adaptation. Dwarfed or robbed of elasticity, the devitalized individuality, even while it seems outwardly fair and symmetrical, perishes from within. Better anarchy than the long continuance of a law which is not our own or which our real nature cannot assimilate. And all repressive or preventive law is only a make shift, a substitute for the true law which must develop from within and be not a check on liberty, but its outward image and visible expression. Human Society progresses really and vitally in proportion as law becomes the child of freedom, it will reach its perfection when, man having learned to know and become spiritually one with his fellow-man, the spontaneous law of his society exists only as the outward mould of his self-governed inner liberty.

He emphasised on this preservation by reconstruction and according to him Vivekananda was in his life time the leading exemplur and the most powerful exponent, making a compromise between the old mentality and the new, the traditional and the critical mind, a synthetical revaluation and restatement, an integral reaction. The conclusion would be that while men like Rammohun, Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Aurobindo turned to the West, the immediate effect of the impact was to drive them back into a reconstructed Indian fold and to their own traditon or as Dr. Dalton would say to 'incorporate Western, ideas into a basically Indian conceptual framework,' i.e. the aspect of preservation which has not been sufficiently stressed by many scholars, both Indian and European. Comparisons are always valid and relevant upto a point. To state that Vivekananda was the modern St. Paul of Shri Ramkrishna or Rabindranath was Shelley incarnate

Sri Aurobindo—The ideal of Human unity (Pondicherry 1963) pp 564-6

„ The Renaissance in India (Pondicherry 1951) pp 39-40

or that Gandhiji's political thought was inspired by Tolstoy, Ruskin and the Sermon on the Mount, or that Sri Aurobindo was Henry Bergson and Gurdjieff combined are no doubt important reminders of Western impact but are half truths only. If freedom as obedience to the law of one's being represented the basic Indian idea, Vivekananda according to Dr. Dalton "made an extremely important development which attempted to incorporate the Western idea of political and social liberty into the classical Indian conception of freedom as spiritual liberation or salvation. The crux of this development occurred with the interpretation of freedom not only as a spiritual state, but as the object of a continuing struggle, as a value that was gradually fulfilled through an evolutionary process which rendered the attainment of freedom desirable at all levels of consciousness : political and social as well as moral and spiritual. This development had no precedent in classical Indian thought... ..realization of spiritual freedom had involved among other things leading a pure life, knowledge of the Vedas and devotion to a good 'guru' (preceptor). With the Western impact the emphasis was changed : attainment of spiritual freedom was now thought to be furthered by social and political liberty, vital stages in a grand quest for complete liberation."

It is often loosely stated that we in India had found a key for internal freedom while the West had worked for freedom without. Vivekananda and Rabindranath in their East and West talks suggested that we must give the West what they need and take from them what we lack. Sri Aurobindo also harped on the same theme as suggesting that we are moving on parallel lines towards the same end. Vivekananda and Aurobindo extended the Indian tradition to 'underwrite a value foreign to that tradition', a fact which is perhaps partially correct because these value-judgments are relative. In this connection I quote from Dr. Bimanbehari

Mazumdar an humourous incident. When various schemes of future Government of India were being suggested and discussed in England on the eve of the renewal of the Company's charter, a writer published a caricature entitled "Plans for the Government of India—advance"....."I propose, therefore in the first place that Rajah Rammohun Roy be appointed Governor General. He also referred to the first sounds of prevalence of a democratic restlessness, as yet undisciplined by a political training, to give expression to the undefined yearnings of multitudes, which would preach down the tyranny of caste, heal the antagonism of ages and fuse the people into a nation. Dr. Mazumdar thought that Gandhiji filled this historic role in the fulfilment of age long aspirations of Indian Nationalism. While his summing up as referred to before is true upto a point, Swami Vivekananda's role in the union of democratic restlessness with some new religion which he named Practical Vedanta and which he deduced from his interpretation of the Shastric love should not be missed by a historian of his eminence in India. It was also proposed that all judicial posts be filled by Mahomedans, all the revenue offices by Hindus and the police by East Indians or Indo-Britons. The beauty of this plan, he claimed that the Rajah was neither a Hindu nor a Mahomedan, nor a Christian. So that he can have no bias towards any part of the population of India ; and the rest being antagonistical that is offered to each other, they would keep, by their very opposition, the whole inactive of steady operation just as an arch is retained firmly

together by contrary pressure on all sides of it (Asiatic Journal 1832 Jan-April pp 281-88). "I regret to say" wrote the Rajah in 1828 "that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them, has entirely deprived them of political feeling and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from understanding any difficult enterprise. It is, I think necessary, that some changes should take the place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort (Works of Rammohun Roy pp 929-30).

He wanted to reestablish the Dharma as set forth in the Vedanta, as interpreted by him.

It would not be out of place to mention here the role of Swami Dayananda and the spirit in which he worked to bring back the Vedic past was explained by Sri Aurobindo in the following words He was not only plastic to the great hand of Nature, but asserted his own right and power to use Life and Nature as plastic material : we can imagine his soul crying still to us with our insufficient spring of manhood and action. "Be a thinker, but be also a doer ; be a soul, but be also a man, be a servant of God but be also a master of Nature ; for this was what he himself was ; a man with God in his soul, vision in his eyes and power in hands to hew out of life an image according to his vision. Hew is the right word, granite himself, he smote out a shape of things with great blows an in his granite.

Other prominent Reformers of the age were Swami Narayan



of Gujarat (1781-1830)—who raised his voice against caste system, Mahatma Ramalingam (1823-1874) of Madras, who also sponsored agitation for widow remarriage, against polygamy, demand of dowry in cash for girls.

CHAPTERS VIII & IX

Ramkrishna-Vivekananda movement (I prefer to follow the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo as he did as early as 1904 to bracket the names. I do so not for any devotional fervour or ecstatic excess but for logical sequel) is an unique chapter in the history of the Nineteenth Century Bengal which led in the early twentieth to a re-estimation, of our values and reshaping of our ideals and had tremendous influence on the nationalist movement and cultural ideas. It is a fact as Isherwood puts it, that Ramakrishna was a phenomenon. It is true that Maxmuller had made him known to the West as Keshub Chandra or Revd. Hastie did it here, long before Vivekananda. He was as Romain Rolland puts it "the symphony of India." The man whose image Rolland invoked was the consummation of two thousand years of spiritual life of three hundred million peopleHe was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incidents, outside the political and social activities of his time. But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of

men and Gods. It was a part of the very source of energy ; the Divine Sakti, whom another master mind Sri Aurobindo characterised as the Infinite Energy—which was love, which was knowledge, which was action. To quote Sri Aurobindo “Some times She is renunciation, She is Pity. This Infinite Energy is Bhawani, she is also Durga, she is Kali, she is Radha the beloved. She is Lakshmi, she is our Mother and the Creatress of us all. The Sakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Saktis of three hundred million people, but she is inactive, imprisoned in the magic circle of *tamas*, the self indulgent inertia and ignorance of her sons. To get rid of ‘*tamas*’ we have but to wake the Brahma within,What is it that so many thousands of holymen, Sadhus and Sannysis have preached to us silently by their lives ? What was the message that radiated from the personality of Bhagavan Ramakrishna Paramhansa ? What is that formed the kernel of eloquence with which lion like heart of Vivekananda sought to shake the world ? It is this that in every one of these hundred millions of men from the Raja on his throne to the coolie at his labour, from the Brahmin absorbed in *Sandhya* to the Paria walking shunned, of men. God liveth. We are all gods.....India must be reborn because rebirth is demanded by the future of the world. India cannot perish. It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and the most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagavan Ramakrishna came and Vivekananda preached.” That was what Sri Aurobindo declared in 1904. He had even the vision of Vivekananda in Jail in 1908. “Never forget the glory of Human nature ! We are the greatest god... Christ and Buddha are but waves in the boundless ocean which I am.....” Thus spoke Vivekananda in America in 1895 which

Isherwood—Ramakrishna and his disciples

Romain Rolland—Life of Ramakirshna

Maxmuller—Life of Vivekananda

A. B. Purani.—Life of Sri Aurobindo—Chapter on Bhavani Mandir.

Romain Rolland himself an enchanted Soul of fine artistic sensibility quoted with approbation as a representative thought of the Master whom he was describing in his remarkable book 'the Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel'. This great creed of Man the God was latent in the Indian atmosphere from the Upanishadic days but it got a new orientation a new spiritual valuation and a novel enrichment from Ramkrishna-Vivekananda. Nineteenth Century in India was an age when there was a tremendous impact from the West in the thought world. The glamour of its material civilization, its rich literature, its concept of social and political ethics, its utilitarian creed and scientific deeds were not lost on the intellectuals.

Even the masses were waking up. The railway train, the electric telegraph and other scientific discoveries were creating havoc in the proletarian mind as much as Mill, Bentham, Ruskin, Rousseau, Tom Paine or Patrick Henry did to the educated. New wine was being poured in old bottles and the stirring within was translated and transmitted mainly through a progressive outlook towards a creative idealism. Originally there was an attempt, conscious and unconscious, to divorce it from the basic trends of old achievements and our heritage of the past. This acceptance of the new with the old was the great contribution which Bengal made to India and to the world. We need not debate what exactly was the nature, import and impact of this nascence or renaissance. The role of Vivekananda in this galaxy of gallants is so impressive and important that he stands out as one of the beacon lights of the torch race of Indian renaissance. In him not only the East and the West met but there was a constant and conscious attempt to find a bridge between materialistic development and spiritual needs, between a technological order and an aesthetic gain, between a medieval ethos and modern day values, based however on a spiritualised humanism. In evolving this new concept, his

somewhat sceptic and discerning soul had the great benefit of a touch with a universal soul like Sri Ramakrishna's whom Rolland conceived as a meeting point, a rapport of all essences—divine and human. His life was therefore not merely the story of a conscience, of a person who from a doubting Thomas became an ardent believer, but it was also the story of the vision of a splendid harmony where the past, the present and the future world mingled and blended in a grand aspiration of all races, all creeds and all ages. It was to be a reconciliation not only between India and America, between the East and the West, between men and women, but also between faith and reason, between conflicting passions and ideologies.

It is perhaps wise to recall that the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement as such was the main creation of Swamiji himself but the spark behind it was the great Master's. People have said that it was in effect a retrograde movement a counter-reformation—words which we have borrowed from similar trends elsewhere and applied here without a fully appreciating that conditions and circumstances often differ. It is illogical to build historical patterns on phonetic vagaries or on an inadequate appreciation of the vital forces working behind. We used words such as renaissance, reformation, modern without defining what their contours are or what their contexts should be. Evolution is hardly a straight line method.

Swami Vivekananda said "I.....had the great good fortune to sit at the feet of one,.....whose life, a thousand fold more than whose teaching, was a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, was in fact the spirit of the Upanishads living in human form.... the harmony of all the diverse thoughts of IndiaIndia has been rich in thinkers and sages..... The one had a great head (Sankara) and other a large heart (Chaitanya) and the time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both his head and heart..... who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Sankara and the wonderful expansive infinite heart of Chaitanya :

One who would see it in every sect the same spirit working, the same God ; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, the weak, for the outcast, for the down trodden, for everyone in this world, inside India or outside India ; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sectsand bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart in existence ; such a man was born . the time was ripe, it was necessary that such a man should be born, and he came, and the most wonderful part of it was that his life's work was just near a city which was full of western thought, a city which had run mad after these occidental ideas, a city which has become more Europeanised than any other city in India. There he lived without any book-learning what so ever ; this great intellect never learnt even to write his own name, but the most brilliant graduates of our university found in him an intellectual giant.....the sage for the time, one whose teaching is just now, in the present time, most beneficial. If I have told you one word of truth it was his and his alone, and if I have told you many things which were not correctthey were all mine, and on me is the responsibility".¹

Thus at the feet of the simple Ramkrishna the most intellectual, the most imperious, the most justly proud of all the great religious spirits of modern India humbled himself. He was the St. Paul of this Messiah of Bengal. He founded his church and his doctrine. He travelled throughout the world and was the aqueduct, akin to those red arches which span the Roman Campagna along which the waters of the spirit had

¹ Rolland's Life of Sri Ramkrishna

A great philosophical and religious mind of the India of to day, Aurobindo Ghose, has paid a brilliant tribute to Ramkrishnas genius, throwing into prominence the exceptional multiplicity of his spiritual powers and the still more exceptional soul directing them :

flowed from India to the Europes², and from the Europes back to India, joining scientific reasons to Vedantic faith and the past to the future.

It is this journey of the soul that I intend to trace in a succeeding volume. In this present, one I have led European thought to those far distant countries of religious mythology, where their Briarcus tree, the giant banyan, too often considered by the west to be dried up and withered, still continues to shoot out great flowering branches. I shall then lead it back by unsuspected paths to its home where modern reason sits enthroned. And it will discover at the end of the course that between one country and other, the gulf of centuries separating them is, when subjected to the 'wireless' of free understanding no greater than a hair's breadth and the space of a second.

We learn from Rolland that Vivekananda, while returning from Europe in 1896, went to salute Da Vinci's 'Last supper' at Milan. He was at Rome for the feast of Christmas and on the Christmas Eve he had seen the simple worship of the Bambino by the Children. Infant Christ and the Virgin Mother greatly attracted him. Yet as Rolland points out, Vivekananda like Tolstoy rejected as dangerous the power of artistic emotion

² "In a recent and unique example in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, we see a colossal spiritual capacity first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were the kingdom of heaven by violence and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experiences and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge. Such an example cannot be generalised. Its object also was special and temporal, to exemplify in the great and decisive experience of a master-soul the truth, now most necessary to humanity towards which a world long divided into jarring sects and schools is with difficulty labouring, that all sects are forms and fragments of a single integral truth and all disciplines labour in their different ways towards one supreme experience. To know, be and possess the Divine is the one thing needful and it includes or leads up to all the rest.....All the rest that the Divine will choose for us, all necessary form and manifestation, will be added' ('The synthesis of Yoga', Arya, Pondicherry No 5, December 1914) In this way the essential significance of the personality and life of Ramkrishna has been realised by a master metaphysician of India to day.

particularly of music, over mind. It may be recalled that Tolstoy was an admirer of Vivekananda. In his learned Dissertation on Painting Mahendra Dutta repeated his brother Vivekananda's maxim that a true artist should represent his own spirit, his dual self, through the medium of exterior objects i.e., separate the outer and inner layer of consciousness. In every art there is the *Lila* (the play) and the *Nitya* (the eternity). Rolland writes "Vivekananda's own brother has filled in the lines indicated by the Master. I cannot urge European aesthetes too strongly to read his Dissertation on Painting (dedicated to the memory of Brahmananda, the first abbot of Ramkrishna Mission with a preface by Abanindra Nath Tagore, 1922) The great Indian religious artist places himself face to face with the objects he wishes to represent in the attitude of a Yogi in search of truth, to him the object becomes the subject." Swamiji also inspired Nivedita as an art critic and she imbibed her Master's ideas. The great master artist Nandalal Bose was in his turn influenced by Nivedita and observed "To the artist the ideal of Swamiji acts like the backbone of art without which art becomes weak and lifeless. Swamiji's method of understanding aesthetic was through Jnana (knowledge), while the Thakur (Ramakrishna Deva) arrived at the realisation of knowledge through aesthetic. Methinks, the path of anubhava (appreciation) of the Thakur is more suitable for the artist. The artists follow this way. The worshipper of Rupa (form) is an idolater, the worshipper of knowledge is a believer of incorporeal being...Havell, Abanindranath, Okakuru (Japanese artist and art critic) Jagadish Bose etc. all used to discuss art with sister Nivedita. All of them were inspired by the ideal of the sister, and she in her turn was inspired by Vivekananda. The sister had discussion with Rabindranath as well. It is stated by many critics that the Gora shows the biggest impact of Vivekananda on Rabindranath through sister Nivedita. According to Brajendranath Seal there was a tinge of Bohemian temperament in Vivekananda's artistic

nature. Jamshedji Tata on the other hand wanted to divert the aesthetic spirit to the cultivation of sciences natural and humanistic—and wanted his help in this work. That persons like Hiram Maxim, the cannon king, Sarah Bernhardt, the world famous actress, Madame Calve, the great singer should be attracted by him show what a colourful personality Vivekananda was. He had inherited from his Master a living experience not a bias for a Oriental Christ or merely a lead for Veda-Vedanta Puranic version of the old school or an eclectic formula of Buddha, Christ, Sankara or Chaitanya but the age old adage that God was in everything and everything was in God not merely as a dictum but as a grand synthetic realisation. “Whereever there is any love it is He the Lord is present there. Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss; where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss, and where friends clasp hands, He the Lord is present

We may use Rollands expression—the angelic Master had instinctively resolved all the dissonance of life into a Mozortian harmony as rich and sweet as the Music of the spheres.

As an orator, as a writer, and as an art critic, Vivekananda inspires us with his burning faith and even seventy years after his passing away we prize this as his great contribution, the great realisation—“Man is not yet. He will have to be”—and that is the Massage.

The role of the Arya Samaj and Swami Dayananda and of the Theosophical movement cannot also be left without notice in any assesment of the Nineteenth Century India and the forces working for the building up of unity. Dayananda's great

Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel—Rolland Romain p. 227, foot note 2.

Swami Vivekananda—Patriot and Prophet—Bhupendranath Dutt p. 310—311.

Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel—Rolland Romain footnote of p. 210.

work was Satyaratha Prakash (The revelation of the Truth). This was his torch of truth. He was a loud champion of the Veda. He called all idolatry a sin and his precept was 'seek to combat, to humiliate, to destroy the wicked, even the rulers of the world and men in power. . Seek constantly to slay, the power of the unjust and the strengthen that of the just, even at the cost of terrible sufferings, of death itself, which no man should seek to avoid.' Romain Rolland has drawn attention to a strange accident in the case of Dayananda "Dayananda concluded a political alliance lasting several years (1879-1881) with a Western community, destined for a great work, the Theosophical Society, on the basis of his vindication of the Vedas against the rising flood of Christianity. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 in the South of India by a Russian Mme Blavatsky, and an American colonel Olcott, and had the great merit of stimulating the Hindus to study their sacred texts especially the Gita and the Uparishads, six volumes of which Colonel Olcott published in sanskrit. It also headed the movement for the establishment of Indian schools especially in Ceylon, and even dared open schools for 'untouchables'. It therefore contributed to the national, religious and social awakening of India ; and Dayananda seemed about to make common cause with it. But when the society took him at his word and offered him its regular co-operation, he refused its offer, thereby taking away from the Theosophical Society all chance of spiritual dominion over India. It has since played a secondary part but has been useful from the social point of view, if the establishment in 1899 of the Central Hindu College at Benaras is to be attributed to the influence of Mrs. Besant. The Anglo-American element, preponderant in its strange mixture of the East and West has twisted in a curious way the vast and liberal system of Hindu Metaphysics by its spirit of noble but limited pragmatism. Further it must be added that it has given itself a kind of pontifical and infallible authority, allowing of no appeal,

which though veiled is none the less implacable and has appeared in this light to independent minds such as that of Vivekananda, who, as we shall see, on his return from America categorically devounced it."

He also refers to a brilliant comprehensive and malicious chapter by count H. Keyserling, in his travel Diary of a Philosopher 1918. Sri Aurobindo however was a great admirer of Dayananda and he referred to his system as "a plenary revelation of religious, ethical and scientific truth. Its religious teaching is monotheistic and the Vedic Gods are different descriptive names of the one Deity; they are at the same time indications of his powers as we see them working in nature and by a true understanding of the sense of the Vedas we could arrive at all the scientific truths which have been discovered by modern research" ("The secret of the Veda", Arya November 1941, Pondicherry)

X

Nineteenth Century in India was an age when new wine was being poured into old bottles and the stirring within was transmuted and transmitted mainly through a progressive outlook towards a creative idealism not divorced from the basic trend of old achievements. This acceptance of the old with the new was the great contribution which Bengal made to India under the inspiring guidance of its stalwarts from Rammohun onwards. The result of this shake up was a political consolidation, and economic readjustment, a sociological upheaval, an agrarian dissatisfaction and simultaneously an intellectual flowering. In this galaxy of gallants, Rabindranath Tagore stands as one of the beacon lights of the 'torch race of Indian renaissance' if I may borrow an expression from Shri Nirod Chowdhury. In him, as in Vivekananda in a slightly different context and looked at from

another angle, not only the East and West met but there was a constant and conscious attempt to find a bridge between materialistic developments and spiritual needs, between a technological order and an aesthetic gain, between a medieval ethos and humanistic values. But neither he nor his family were true rebels or iconoclasts in that sense. They were conservatives, compromisers, assimilators. They tried to find out new moulds from old paths, not divorced from the old moorings and thought their social concept and content were placed in colourful bottles, they were not entirely new brews but of old vintage. Here was an interesting experiment of being and becoming, of national cum international synthesis—Mill and Bentham mixed with Hafiz and Kalidas, Parker and Newman with Upanishads and Jatakas. As a matter of fact, the story of Jorasanko Tagore family had become almost a legend of the Nineteenth Century and for more than a century it dominated the cultural and collective life of Calcutta through the dramatic personalities it produced in three generations headed by Prince Dwarkanath Tagore about whom early Calcutta Ditchers wrote so much and Emily Eden Lord Aucklands Sister wrote in her diary, Maharshi Debendranath, the Pope of the Brahmo Samaj as he was used to be called, and by Kabiguru Rabindranath, whose terrible impact on our national life is still evident in today's context. Born in 1794, Dwarkanath Tagore had the usual Schooling in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, but also learnt English in Sherbourne School, had private teachers like J. G. Gordon and James Calder. He had also assistance from William Adams. He had the foresight to see and realize that India whether it was liked or not had been drawn into the vortex of international axis, not only for a cultural compact but for trade relations and an economic build up. It has to come into contact with the outer world. He had collaborated actively in the foundation of the Hindu College in 1817. When he was the Sheristadar of the 24 Parganas Collectorate for excise, salt and opium, a

lucrative post in those days, similar to the one that Rammohun had held in Rungpore in those days he made a donation of Rs. Ten Thousand, a princely sum according to the standards of the early Nineteenth Century because he thought that "the main channel by which real knowledge may be transferred from the European sources to the intellect of Hindusthan" was by spread of western type of education and by dissemination of western language, thought, science and technique. The poet's father Maharshi was another giant who shepherded his fold into a sober and sublimespath which while retaining old ways in their pristine glory did not fail to prune its unnecessary growths and the Adi Brahma Samaj into which the poet was born attempted a delicate balance between old tenets and new expressions, a curious amalgam of Upanishadic monism, Hafiz and Rumi the sufi poets, and Mill, Bentham and the utilitarians.

The nature, import and impact of this renaissance have been debated by scholars. Was it really a rediscovery then a discovery or nascence? Sri Aurobindo's estimate of it seems to be a somewhat full explanation of the phenomenon. "From this meeting of a foreign art and civilization with a temperament differing from the temperament which created them, there issues, as these usually does issue from such meeting, an original art and an original civilization. Originality does not lie in rejecting outside influences but in accepting them as new mould into which our own individuality may run. That is what happened in Bengal". It was not merely the story of a conscience but the story of a society electric with thought and loaded to the brim with passion and that is how we created a language, a literature and a nation. We are all as Sri Aurobindo says children of the past, possessors of the present and creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit* of

* Sri Aurobindo—A system of National Education pp 5 6.



course there is a controversy whether the progressive forces which Vivekananda or Bankim unleashed were not in the nature of a counter reformation or a militant neo-conservatism with a veneer of rationalism. Bengal of those days was in one of its rare moods of shifting its outlook. The mere compulsion of tradition was losing its force. Our pioneers thought it their business to recreate and reenact a vision of the world including those elements of reverence and order without which society lapses into riot. Yet one has to pursue them with a burning faith, though the seeds of tradition are the surest in our moorings and our heritage of the past an asset worth to be preserved. How to temper these opposites with an unflinching rationalism, a spirit of searching thought and an atmosphere of scientific enquiry was the problem of the day. Like all human problems it was more a problem of harmony, integration and assimilation. A poet's dream, a philosopher's jargon, a singer's song have to be fitted in with social justice, political freedom, and economic salvation. Men have to adjust so that Man may live. 'Angst' and alienation need not prove to be fundamentals in a scheme of life, more so in a world of scientific advancements and technological progress. The days of robots and automations or an electronic and atomic age were yet to come. The pace was in any case terrific. The country was being faced with situations which juxtapose with frightening rapidity. In 100 years we have overtaken the past five thousand years. To evaluate and interpret this age and give it a meaning and a purpose we needed the genius of poets and writers who have a sense of history, and who have a sense of truth and of eternal values, which in their highest sense Rabindranath Tagore represented this as equating humanity with divinity and Man as God. This was in essence also the teaching of Swami Vivekananda which he had inherited from his Master. The social philosophy of Sri Aurobindo had also placed an emphasis on this aspect in another way by positing the double-ladder



of consciousness of ascent and descent, man rising to Godhood and the Divine returning to its earth consciousness. Sri Aurobindo puts in this inimitable poetic language in 'Savitri'

Two powers from original ecstasy born
Pace near but parted in the life of man
One leans to earth, the other yearns to the skies
Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect Earth
Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect Heaven

Nineteenth Century in India tried through its way of life and its great exponents to realize this poetic ideal and give it a practical shape. Prince Dwarkanath, Maharshi Debendranath Baradada Dwijendranath, Viswakabi Rabindranath and his equally gifted brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces like Satyendranath, Jyotirindranath, Sarala Devi or Indira Devi or Abanindranath or Gagonendranath—they practically made history. One could get the history of a nation in making in that small street of Calcutta, the pulsation of a resurgent national life which had its being there in art, literature, new thoughts about spiritual values, social activities, and in an intense sense of national well-being and how to bring it about in different departments of life—the story of the infusion and injection of a dynamic urge in a static society. The patriarch of the clan was the venerable Maharshi, who had developed a life of lofty spiritual detachment and was almost the epicentre of all wave movements which shook his sons, daughter his nephews and grand nephews, and other members and acquaintances of the family—the ideal being not a maimed life of monastic seclusion but a living inspiration of *joi de vivre*. It is a fact that Maharshi had considerable influence in shaping Rabindranath's life. We are reminded of Rabindranath's description of him when as a boy he had accompanied him to the Himalayas—"Stars in the dark dim-lit sky, faint flicker of a misty down sibhouted in the background, Maharshi in deep meditation facing the East seemed to be one with that serene atmosphere

of calm and peace." We read also of this paterfamilias in Abanindranath's story of two Searchers—"It was a blazing hot summer noon. Maharshideva was proceeding along Birbhum uplands in a palanquin. The bearers had got tired. They placed the palanquin at a particular spot. Maharshideva found before his eyes a vast rugged expanse of a prairie like meadow. We do not know what he saw in that spreading tree but from his inner most depth came the words which were inscribed on the panels of that multi-coloured glass temple—He is the comfort of my life, the solace of my mind, the peace of my soul. The second searcher also strove through verse and rhyme, song and deed to find the same synthesis from Nature's God and back to Man again create a real heaven of peace where the world would become one nest. That was the reason why the aims of Viswabharati were declared to be "To study the mind of man in its realization of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view, to seek to realize in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West..... free from all antagonism of race, nationalism, creed or caste and in the name of the Supreme Being who was Sivam, Shantam, Advaitam, the Good, the Peaceful and the One."

The noticeable curious fact was that in the intellectual upheaval that followed in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, there was less of that psychological displacement which we find elsewhere in world history mainly because of three reasons—(a) the inner virility of Indian culture, both Hindu and Mahamedan, the Hindu more for its assimilative and catholic tendencies and Mahomedan more for its vigorous and entrenched beliefs (b) The more liberal policy compared

with other colonial powers (e.g. Seely's concept of the civilizing role of the British Empire as an attempt to infuse a prosaic conquest with a poetic glamour, which belief gave many a liberal and sensitive Briton a genuine sense of mission.) (c) the rapid growth of an intellectual 'elite' which had its nebulous existence even from earlier days. These historic factors have to be taken note of before we can take stock of what Tagore stands for, his philosophy of life, his religion of Man, his doctrine of harmony. We have also to appreciate and realize two things. First he was born in an epoch and in a family where old ideas and ideals were having their first shock from the impact of a western civilization and though we have hailed him as a prophet of nationalism or a preacher of internationalism, as seer and as a sage, as a creative idealist and an educationist, as a leader of thought and leader of men, he was essentially first and last a poet, a dreamer, a weaver of imageries, rich, rapturous and resonant, sensuous, passionate and sensitive to every yearning in man and nature, susceptible to their every change in mood and outlook and combining them is an expression of rare harmony and beautiful diction. His was almost not only an all devouring mind but a seismographic one. Today when the time has come to take stock of Tagore, not merely in subjective adulation but also in an objective valuation of what he stands for, what he tells us, what he preaches, this limitation of a poet's religion has to be recognised. He was himself aware of this limitation and he reminded us often about it.

Against this unique canvas, we have to evaluate his concept of religion of Man as it developed. To have a correct appraisal, even if partial, for a true poet is born and not made, we have

to delve not only into the history of the Nineteenth Century Bengal but also into the poet's family environment, his great love for the ideals of the past coupled with his catholicity of mind, emotional receptiveness, his personal contact with the West, its mind, art, literature and culture, its rationalistic approach, its scientific outlook, its spirit of quest and enquiry. Added to these fundamentals were the influences of an Upanishadic monism, a Vaishnavic dualism, a Buddhist way of life, an esoteric idealism and a pagan abandon. This curious amalgam produced a rare refreshing vintage. It was a cocktail of many spirits but fundamentally on a base which though autochthonous was a revaluation of values. It has been correctly stated that Tagore's reflections disclose a philosophy in which traditional ideas take on a new meaning and the emerging patterns are reshaped with a new clarity, a new hope and a new colour of dawn. It ultimately took shape in a doctrine of life whose best exposition was in the theme of divinity of humanity and humanity of divinity. His Jivandevata, that ever-evolving personality gradually merged himself in the Universal Man whose grand prophet he was in the Hibbert Lectures. This concept grew in volume and in faith from an intuitive base within, than from an eclectic build up from without. From Nature to Nature's God, from beauty to the possessor of beauty, from Love to the Beloved, was a subjective-objective realization mainly impersonal though a glimpse of a personal tie may be seen here and there. In the Hibbert Lectures he reiterated in no uncertain terms—"The Solitary enjoyment of the Infinite in meditation no longer satisfied me and the texts which I

used for my silent worship lost their inspiration without my knowing it. I am sure I vaguely feel that my need was spiritual self-realization in the life of man through some disinterested service." Whatever the mental process was, it was a saga of faith in humanity which said in poetic terms—I deny the negation of Man. I consider the loss of faith in Man as a sin. This concept of Man was centred round a belief that Man was an end in himself and Art was the response of a Man's creative soul to the call of the Real and from beginning of our History we are seeking value and not success. This concept was bound to differ from that brand which arose from an ethical union, from a concept of society based on values liberated from the time-honoured spiritual bondage. Today's humanism would speak of a rediscovery of the essence of Man's nature. It was not to believe but to question and enquire. Man was a focal point there also but his reason was a biological heritage rather than a metaphysical category. Tagore's approach was not therefore merely a sentimental langour basking in the misty vagueness of a celtic twilight or a Materlinkian symbolism or even a fashion parade. He realized that we were something more than hollow men or escapists, tortured by Libidos or conditioned by complexes. There was no primrose path to an eternal bonfire. The inspiration has to come from an ignition within. Tagore's approach to world problem was considerably tinged by this specific outlook. It was in addition an imaginative and not a pragmatic approach. Tagore realized that human mind was hungry for something deeper in terms of moral and spiritual development and anything which raised man above his normal level, gave human personality a new dimension of spiritual quality and moral depth. In the light of today's happenings in a nuclear age, Tagore's 'crisis clarity' as Prof. Norman Cousins, a great American savant puts it, was remarkable. He could see almost with a prophetic vision that men must unite if Man were to live. It was no use



coming together without uniting. "Tomorrow's history will begin with a chapter on internationalism and all must come to terms with it ; or else there will be no end to these wars of annihilation under the spur of the national passion." A radiant humanist of today would say that a good society is held together not by its political or economic power but by its ethos, its culture, its tradition, its multiple forms of co-operation and there is a spirit of mutualism as well as a respect for difference. Tagore's *Kalantar* or Epoch's end, his *Gora*, show clearly his social doctrines in action. His 'Jathamahasay' in 'Chaturanga' is the exponent of the type of the religion of Man he wants to be practised. He believed that society was for Man and not man for society and acceptance and not rejection was the fundamental requisite towards an universal humanism. The social concept was to be a welfare one but there has to be a revaluation of its moral and aesthetic needs. We remember Charles Andrews recalling in his inimitable way how Rabindranath reacted to the first world war. His outspoken frankness at the Imperial University of Tokyo in Japan had cost him his popularity and he wrote one of the most beautiful poems.

'My Master had bid me, while I sing at the roadside to sing the song of defeat for that is the bride whom he woos in secret. She has put on the dark veil hiding her face from the crowd but the jewel glows on her breast in the dark..... . The door has been opened in the lonely chamber, the call has sounded and the heart of the darkness throves with owe because of the coming tryst.' This very delicate beauty of his mental pang was the touch-stone of Tagore's sense of values. It was his strength as well his weakness. Man the Universal got mixed with Man the Individual. His humanism was not exactly a concept like Shakespeare's "What a piece of work is a man, How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! In form and moving how express and admirable ! In action how like an angle ! In appreciation how like a God." From his early

youth, Tagore had sung of love and joy, of passion and praise, of Nature and Nature's God. He had moved from beauty to greater beauty, from joy to intenser joy by a special adjustment of the senses. He was not merely a critic of life nor exactly a craftsman. Behind the surface vision, surface contact or surface reaction, there was an intregality and a spark which threw a chain reaction both in the author as well as in the reader. Night awakened to the anthem of the stars. Added to this was the poet's emotive nature which like a seismograph could record his intense variations of mental reaction. The poet was one day conducting a service in the temple and he was reciting one of his sweetest songs.

As the footstep of the first rays of light began to ring
My world-weary heart took to wing.

The inner vision of the song lit up the poet's face and it became aglow with the freshness of the morn and every word seemed to vibrate with an experience that was real and instant. Today in this world's area of darkness, in a society of angst, anxiety and alienation, where man and nature are conspiring to create an atmosphere of violence, a climate of excitement it would be heretic to profess a theory of poetry, a view of rhythmic and creative self expression, which will be dubbed as romantic extravaganza not having roots in the hard core of man's toils, tears and sweat. But we forget that a greater era of man's living seems to be in promise. A glint of this change according to Sri Aurobindo was visible, as the ideal spirit of poetry not merely in Wordsworth's pantheistic or panenthestic utterances but in the conscious effort of Whitman, the tone of Carpenter

and in the significance of AE's poetry and this trend in his opinion was the reason of the rapid immediate fame of Rabindranath Tagore. The idea that the poet was something than a versifier more a craftsman, he was a seer, a path-finder. He has to fathom all the depths yet unplumed, to complete what has been left undone or half done. Life and its expressions were part of an integral process and true realism sprang from that inner vitality.

We can trace this central theme in Tagore's *Jibandevata* cult, in his '*Manasi*' concept and gradually in '*Viswabhubaneswar*' or '*Mahamanab*' ideas—ideas which became a sort of mysterious link not only with the world outside and beyond but with the world within. The true humanity and its divinity have to be realised within one's own self. The Sufis and Sants, the Auls and the Bauls had resurrected this ancient radiant faith and had distributed them widely. Rabindranath's true poetic genius had not hesitated to pick this gold lying in the dust. As a matter of fact his poetic expression underwent a process of evolution, an ascent from peak to peak. The '*Naibedya-Gitali-Gitanjali*' period provided a date line of superb emotional excellence. With '*Balaka*' came a change of weather. His creative mind was seeking a shelter against poetic disillusionment and where could he find one but in the service of Man, the legend and symbol of the universal. In a way it was a descend from the lofty heights, but not leaving behind its chissled poetic experience of the earlier age which had expressed itself in a romantic abandon. The wheel came full circle. This new dimension of his mental outlook manifested itself in the Hibbert Lectures. It was more the explanation of a creed which was in seed than unfolding of a new doctrine, reorientation than a recantation. But the fact remained that it sang more of Man than of God i.e. God the Father "*Pitanohsi*" got merged in God the Son or Man and Nature was the holy ghost which brought in this merger and gave it a divine inebriation. Some said that it typified an

impact of Christian ideas on a truly representative Upanishadic mind. The Sunday Times of London once wrote that Tagore's mystic dullness appealed as a kind of anodyne. In his Religion of Man he visualized a composite concept which he calls 'Advaitam' i.e. an absolute unity which is not the mathematical magnitude of extension, but an intense quality of harmony. Advaitam is therefore '*Anandam*'—the Infinite one who is Infinite Love. When this bigger Spiritual Sense is dull, the desire for realisation is reduced to physical possession, an actual grasping in space. In the poet's inimitable words "This longing for magnitude becomes not an aspiration for the great but a mania for the big". That is why the poet also echoed his Upanishadic forefathers as saying '*Para Akasat aja atma*'. This birthless spirit is beyond space. It is Purusha, it is the Person. That is why Man's universe is not a compartmental thing and his creative spirit is all comprehensive. Man is the highest point of synthesis. The first two chapters of his Hibbert Lectures deal with these and the third Chapter 'The Surplus in Man' begins with a quotation from Atharva Veda with this query—who was it that imparted form to Man, gave him majesty, movement, manifestation and character inspired him with wisdom ?

'Tasmad vai V.dvan Purusamidan brahmeti manayati'. That was a declaration against the bondage of Nature. He is—He exists—He renews himself. He recreates. He reasserts. That is the fundamental of Man. Tagore's *Mahamanab* idea germinated from the idea that this real Man is the bigger Man. This theory is further amplified by the classical example of Indian thought which divides life into four stages. '*Brahmocharjya*' was to be the period of discipline, '*Garhastya*' the period for worldly work, '*Banaprasthya*' the retreat for the loosening of the bonds and '*Prabajya*' the expectant awaiting for the freedom of death in an unruffled manner. From individual body disciplined and trained, intellectually physically and morally to community life, dedicated not only to the individual lust and greed



but to the higher values of life, then from community to universe, widening one's own outlook and loosening petty bonds of selfishness, family ties, pride and prejudice and then from this widened universal outlook to Infinity—merger in a Eternal Self—that was to be the pilgrim's progress of the soul. To a man dedicated in this way, this world is not a snare, an illusion or a frustration or an angst or anguish or alienation. He sees beyond and behind the surface. A dip into the unknown and even into the known world of forms, brings to him a realization as stark as startling, as real—the factum that the world was not an empty dream. That is why he could make his famous declaration.

Let trial, tribulation, sorrow come, let death intervene but let not Man lose his dignity, let him say through all ages, time and space—I exist, He is Me.

Tagore's philosophy is not a rigid system of thought. It is just like light and shadow. In the poet's religion we find no doctrine or injunction but the attitude that our entire being goes towards a truth which is ever to be revealed in its own endless creation. The Philosophy of Rabindranath* was the caption of a book which Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan published in 1918 and it became fashionable from then to talk of Tagore's philosophy as a distinct brand just as we talk of Sankara's or Ramanuja's. This book, says Narvane, shows the deep and pervasive influence of Tagore on Radhakrishnan. He examines Tagore's attitude to Nature, his conception of Beauty, his profound insight into the 'unity at the root of things.' It is not incorrect to say that in bringing out the spiritual coherence that held together Tagore's scattered utterances and expounding the philosophical significance of the poet's inspired lines, the author was also working out his own world-view,

* U. S. Narvane—Essays in Philosophy and culture—The Elephant and the Lotus (Asia Publishing House).

in a way. 'In this book'—says a critic, 'Radhakrishnan was unwittingly rehearsing his own future flights in the domain of international literature. Much of what he says here about Indian religion, philosophy and civilization in general terms forms the theme of many later works'. 'The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore' emphasises the Vedic-Upanishadic element in Tagore's thought. The emphasis sometimes appears one-sided and leaves the impression that the significance of Tagore's Vaishnava theistic background has been missed. We add there to the impact of western poetry, philosophy, religion and science as also his great indebtedness to Buddhistic thought and medieval saints and a strain of pagan abandon. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes "Tagore's supreme spirit is not an abstract entity residing at a safe distance from the world, but is the concrete, dynamic life at the centre of things, giving rise to the roar of the wind and the surge of the sea..... Rabindranath's is a wholeness of vision which cannot tolerate any absolute divisions between body and mind, matter and life, individual and society..... His message is simple, stick to Religion, let religions go..... To realise this wholeness of spirit it is not necessary to follow traditional paths ; for the path of devotion is trackless."

His 'Hindu view of Life,—the lectures which he delivered at Oxford in 1926 reiterates this view once again when he was bold to say that Hinduism was not a rigid set of doctrines but 'a way of life', an attitude. In 'Kalki' he repeated Rabindranath's thought that mere uniformity was not enough. It has to be replaced by harmony and it can only be of the spirit. In dogmatic religions all questions are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. But the poet's religion is fluid like the atmosphere round the earth where lights and shadows play hide and seek. It never undertakes to lead any body any where to any solid conclusion, yet it reveals endless spheres of light because it has no wall round itself.

So to the poet, light and darkness, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, faith and scepticism equally were comprehensive and his philosophy centred round this cardinal fact. His religion therefore did not and need not lead to the basic realisation of the Sadhak who had realized the Absolute but of one who had seen in his poet's vision that multicoloured dome and its electric flashes. He does not realize the definite gain of a positive faith but the vibrant shadow of a playfulness or *Lila*, just like the evermoving *Balaka*—Not here, not here, else where my friend. Life was to be an eternal move, a devotion for something afar but yet very near, a desire of the moth for the star, of the night for the morrow, but not forgetting that the night contains the seed for the morrow. It was to be a quest for the Holy Grail but not rejecting Earth but transforming it. There was no question of an ascetic denial. 'Singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest'. Yet true to his Indian tradition he captured the rapture of an Eternal and All-Pervasive Vision whose purpose was not to possess, not to have but to be. The true measure of a man is not what he has but what he becomes. To gain truth is to admit its separatedness but to be true is to become one with truth.

'Ye etad vidu amritas te bhavanti'

Those who realize this, transcend the limits of mortality not in duration of time, not in point of space, but in perfection of truth and in a cosmic unity and in this way Tagore develops his religion of Man

'Esho devo Viswakarma'

We have to be a world-worker—we must work for all. All work that is good, however small is universal in character. And that is why the poet's prayer arises—

'Where can I meet thee unless in this mine house made thine? Where can I join Thee unless in this my work transformed into Thy Work? If I leave my home, I shall

not reach thy home ; if I cease my work, I can never join thee in thy work. For thou dwellest in me and I in thee. Thou without me or I without thee are nothing.'

Only a poet who has this synoptic view can boldly say and make a confession of faith.

"I am able to love my God because he gives me freedom to deny Him."

It has been stated that Tagore's ethics can justly be described as activist to the core. Accustomed to the negative side of Indian thought, its renunciation and retreat, we almost forgot that "spirit is struggle and life is a deed" as Rudolph Eucken would say. But to Tagore it is not merely an ethical axiom either, it is not only enriched by an aesthetic experience but a spiritual humanism also, which at the sametime urges one to a creative evolution. 'To all other creatures, Nature is final—They never cry for emancipation from the limits of life. But Man, to his eternal glory 'crosses nature's bonds' and proclaims his freedom. 'Suckled at the wolf's breast, sheltered in the brute's den, man suddenly discovers that his true power lies in abandoning his brute strength and exchanging it for the freedom of the spirit.' Tagore however insists on the difference between outer and inner freedom. 'Our outer freedom is freedom from the guidance of pleasure and pain ; our inner freedom is freedom from the narrowness of self-desire.' This distinction saves us from regarding Freedom as the opposite of Restraint, and helps us to see them as complementary parts of the Moral order.'

In a song which is widely sung and known, Tagore says
My liberation is in light and alone, in the lighted sky

In the delightful grass and dust
Beyond the realm of body and mind
Where I lose myself and refined

My liberation rests in the refrain of a song
Which floats above in the high



This is not merely poetry, a poetic idealization but an active realization also because—

‘My liberation is not merely situate in the subliminal consciousness of all but in the difficult tasks ahead which belittles troubles and sorrows.’

Rabindranath is Vedantic Advaitam is not Sankar’s monism or Ramanuja’s is dualism, it is tinged more by Hegel’s Idea and Existence. Liberation or Mukti was to go back to our original entity which is divinity within one. It is not denial of one’s self, but it life in its multi-coloured dome which stains the white radiance of eternity. Rabindranath’s concept of ‘*Tumi*’ and ‘*Ami*’ Thou & Me shows the dynamic urge in an everevolving though ultimately stable unity. It is not merely the ‘elan vital’ of Bergsonian theory of creative evolution but a recognition of the fact that what is evolved is already involved in this world and is merely ‘*Lila*’ or manifestation. It is more than Hegel’s Idea and Existence. Liberation is mainly to realise the innate divinity in us i.e. to go back to our original entity. It is somewhat remarkable that in this fundamental exchange of position of the divinity in humanity Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo had an unity of thought, though each expressed it in his own way and in his own line. As a matter of fact Shri Ramakrishna’s philosophy was nothing but a philosophy of synthetic Vedanta which Vivekananda turned into practical Vedanta we may recall what Maxmuller once said “If we remember that these utterances of Ramakrishna recall to us not only his own thoughts, but the faith and hope of millions of human beings we may indeed feel hopeful about the future of that Country. This constant sense of the presence of God is indeed the common ground on which we may hope that in time not too distant the great temple of the future will be erected in which Hindus and non-Hindus may join hands and hearts in worshipping the same supreme spirit—who is not far from everyone of us for in Him we live and move

and have our being.* Again he said... . He was not an original thinker the discoverer of a new idea or the propounder of any new view of the world. But he saw many things which others had not seen, he recognised the Divine Presence where it was least suspected. He was a poet, an enthusiast or if you like a dreamer of dreams.** This was what Rabindranath was.

XI

“O ! Aurobindo

Accept this homage of Rabindra”.

Thus sang Rabindra Nath Tagore in an inspired moment sixty years ago. A mighty saga of faith, beauty and strength was born on that day. The poet's sensitive search had discerned.

The articulate embodiment
of the Nation's soul

Its voice incarnate and its goal.

Reading it more than half a century later we find what a prophetic vision it was, what an intense human document pulsating with life, what a true assessment of absorbing interest.

Yet Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo were not alike though they belonged to the same epoch. They were not only the products of an era of cultural impact, revaluation of values, of a new toxic wine being poured into old bottles but something more. They were almost the lingering last of the mighty Titans of a resurgent nationalism and a humanist movement whom it was the privilege of Bengal to give to India and Indi

* Classical Indian Philosophies—Their Synthesis in the Philosophy of Ramakrishna by Dr. S. C. Chatterjee.

** Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings (1st Ed.) quoted by Sri Pranab Ranjan Ghosh.

to the World. Yet in their own way they survived as true representatives of India. Both belonged in their different ways to that band of creative idealists who had unleashed spiritual and moral forces. Both had the vision to see and realise that in a world full of misery, chaos and confusion, hate and spite neither a maimed life of monastic seclusion nor a mad orgy of insensate activity were enough to salvage the lost human heritage or to express the growing sense of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo laid stress on the need for an integral process, for a progressive self enlargement, for a synthetic realisation that all life is 'yoga'. Rabindranath never claimed to be a 'Sadhak' in that sense. His passionate claim was that he had seen and sung, lived and loved. His earth consciousness and his receptivity to various moods of nature brought him his poetic realisation of the different aspects of the Infinite and its interplay with the Finite. He repeatedly said—'I am a poet, I live too near the earth. I am not a Shadhak'. He considered himself to be the messenger of the one who was varied and his mission was to express that diversity without forgetting the inner unity. In one of his later poems on his birthday relayed from Kalimpong, he said—

"The few candles that are still lit
 'neath memory's writ
 In the quiet of my life's even
 with the vanishing sun
 I offer them to Thee,
 Let my lyre lie low,
 silent, inspired
 at your feet. When I go
 I leave behind me
 The flowers that have not bloomed
 Love that awaits,
 Baffled in its reach
 Love that remains. That dies not.

If Rabindranath's canvas was wider and more colourful. Sri Aurobindo's exploration was deeper and more fundamental. If one was in search of the eternal bridegroom his "Dolce Amoree" with all the passion of a pagan, the fire of a Prometheus and surrender of a Radha, the other's was the quiet poise of a Yogi who strove for a conscious and radical change of nature and the best means for its transformation all round. It was not merely urge but its upsurge, its ascent. Creative evolution was according to him a movement to assimilate or better express the higher and the finer movements of life and this higher is laid in it and is not the one coming into it by the pressure of onward movement. That is why he dipped into the silence beyond the surface mind because when out of it, it brought all that a being could want—

Joy unimagiabile, ecstasy illimitable
 Knowledge omnipotent, might omniscient
 Light without darkness truth that is dateless.

Coming to the poem with which we began what did Sri Aurobindo represent according to the poet ?

That full and free life

For which the God in Man sits enthroned in meditation and in strife

Night and Morn
 For which poets sing in deathless voice of thunder
 And rends the sky asunder
 For which heroes march
 Through death and travail search
 For which ease hangs down its dead in shame
 Death forgets its pang and its name
 That God gifted priceless treasure
 That inner determination in full measure.

It was not merely political freedom. It was that and something more. And the poet knew—

The victory is assured. Yours is the say
 You have the word and we obey
 Who cares to shed tear
 Who shall flee in fear
 Who shall repress the truth
 Who is the coward who shelters under untruth
 It is the weak who weeps
 It is the lowly that is lost.

Again, the poet's prophetic faith knows no bounds. He speaks in clearer accents—

Has any monarch however high his throne
 Has ever been able to punish the messenger of the Morn
 Whom He the terrible sends with olympic torch
 To illumine the world's darkest porch.
 To that man who carries it like a cross even
 Iron bars bow to him and chain him not, prisons welcome

It was more the vision of a perfection which the poet symbolized in Sri Aurobindo—

In this hour of trial and tribulation,
 Of grief, sorrow and annihilation
 Amid bondage and despair
 I look at thee and hear
 The unfettered soul's rapture clear
 The eternal pilgrim's muse, Oh seer
 The song of a ceaseless quest.

The poet moves on. He visualises neither poverty nor fear, neither sorrow, nor shame nor wrong. He characterised Aurobindo's message as a message sublime, of deathless death in rhyme and he was the poet who sat in people's heart

Oh ! who thou prophet wast.

The poet hears "the mighty roar of rumbling waves of the sea, That is ever free that craves in thunder, lightning and in rain And in this medley of song he brought his humble one

"Aurobindo, Rabindra's homage you have won".



At the same time the poet instinctively realizes that Sri Aurobindo is but the willing instrument through which the Divine is working and to Whom he has surrendered. The poet too bows to Him who in his playful mood not only creates and destroys but leads a gain from darkness to light, from death to life. It is He—

Who talks in diverse languages
In different climes to diverse races
He whose voice we hear in all great endeavour
In all great achievements and splendour

This sense of the Divine encompassing everything had also dawned on the poet and it was a reminder that he saw this Divine however imperfectly in a kindred soul. That was the greatest tribute he could pay to Sri Aurobindo to a man, to whom

Sorrow does not matter
Bruises do not hurt
Losses count not
Fear has no grip

and who does neither believe in a false king nor in his punishment and who can defy death and to such a man comes the eternal answer of duality

I exist, you exist
And in between us Truth doth stay.

This picture of Sri Aurobindo was to quote Sri Aurobindo himself

“A preface only of the epic climb
Of human soul to an eternal state

“Twenty years later, the poet paid a greater tribute to the Saint of Pondicherry when he said—“I have seen you in your first Tapasya and had bowed to you in deep reverence. Today I have the good fortune of seeing you again in your serene calmness, in your second Tapasya and I bow again and

say "O Aurobindo, take my homage ; you have realised in your own life the saying of our Rishis that we are one with the Universe".

Years ago Sri Aurobindo in his book on the Ideal of the Karmoyogin had outlined the real meaning and purpose of India's awakening—the deep and underlying forces that were shaping her destiny and the best way of serving her. His Uttarpa speech delivered just after his acquittal was remarkable for the revelation of the new faith and light that had dawned on him in jail. A new urge of withdrawing himself from day to day politics came up on him and he retired to Pondicherry and lived there in silent communion for 40 years. People have called him an escapist who should have been in the thick of the fight. But his dynamism was not asleep. It burst forth in new vigour, in a new rhythm—embracing all aspects of existence striving for a richer, fuller and nobler life. With his usual profundity of thought, sublimity of conception and loftiness of language he had long ago discussed the problem of Human Unity in a series of 35 articles in the pages of 'Arya' during the first world war. He was a Yogi but he never failed to emphasise the national value of mundane things such as art, its aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual aspects. He took up his pen in defence of Indian culture. As a poet his vision soared high above the cosmic oneness in supramental region and his collective poems and dramas and his latest "Savitri" closed a chapter of poetic excellence and beauty coupled with deep penetrating thought that is hardly surpassed, Savitri was conceived as "a priestess of immaculate ecstasies" with a body "like parable of dawn" "a niche for veiled divinity". He had visualised in her the perfection to which human spirit could aspire. We find this gradually revealed in the Books of Birth and Quest, Book of Life, Book of Love and the Book of Fate. It is not without significance that the country got independence on the 15th of August, the day of Sri Aurobindo's birth. His prophetic words still ring true.

"It was the supreme misfortune of India that before she was able to complete the round of her experience and gather up the fruit of her long millenium of search and travail that her national life broke into fragments. There is still an unexhausted vitality in her. She yet nourishes the seeds of rebirth and renewal. Will she yet arise, combine her past and continue the great dream where she left it off, shaking off on the one hand the soils and filth that have grown and recast on the other her own.... In doing so lies one chance of salvation".

"Night is darkest before dawn and the coming of dawn is inevitable. But the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern. It must come by other means from within and not from without."

Prof. Sisir Kumar Maitra of Benares has correctly pointed out that the standpoint of Indian philosophy has been value-centric, Reality is not mere Existence but value and the chief concern of philosophy was to discover the ultimate value, which embraced conception of (1) intuition (2) doctrine of reality (3) theory of evolution, (4) testing of man in the scheme of things.

Bergson and Whitehead also refer to the four fold contents of a synoptic context. In his Synthesis of Yoga Sri Aurobindo shows his readers how to reach the goal which he calls the goal of supermanhood and supernature.

'Utsaha' is the flame like the Vedic Agni, Guru is the man who helps, Kala is the time factor. There is no duality between spirit and matter. There is nothing like Maya or illusoin in connection with matter of the material world. It is by a process of involution—It is Sat; Chit and Anandam. The most

important aspect of Aurobindo's teaching was its aim and ultimate purpose which was to divinize the whole of humanity by transforming mind, life and matter. At present all three which constitute the man are gross and crude. The usual way would be to extricate the soul to find for it a heaven in the Divine. But Aurobindo had evolved and that distinct approach. Individual salvation was not attractive. It was not even so for a বোধিসত্ত্ব or a Vivekananda. What he aimed at was not merely Collective Salvation of all humanity but of the very material of which they are made. The mental, vital and material stuff of which man is made today has to be transformed into a subtler finer and nobler substance so as to make it a vehicle for a higher level of Existence than mind or even over mind into a supramental state where pure knowledge, greater harmony and divine bliss would not only reign supreme but for always and always. That is a dream worth striving for. Man's eternal life rests not merely in distance but in space, time as well. To that Aurobindo we all pay homage.

XII

Born in 15th August 1872, Sri Aurobindo was a world known figure when he died in 1950. The story of his life is briefly told. It can be divided in to five broad periods 1872-79, 1879-1893, 1894-1906, 1906-1910, 1910-1950. 15th August seems to have some how a special significance. It is the day of the assumption of the Virgin Mary; it implies that the physical nature is raised to the Divine Nature. Virgin Mary refers to Nature, Jesus is the Divine soul born in man—He is the Son of God as well as the son of man (Pp. 4 Mother India, August 1952, referred to in Divakars book pp. 26). It



was a date which had already been consecrated by the Mahasamadhi of Shri Ramakrishna, the same date was also to become memorable from 1947 as the day of our independence.

On 15th August 1872 was born a son to a pucca sahib in every sense of the word, who would not ordinarily, it is said, engage even Bengali speaking servants. He sent his sons Benoy, Manomohon and Aurobindo to a wholly European School—Loretto Convent in Darjeeling free from the taint of native indiscipline and later sent them to England for education in 1879. While his two brothers went to the Manchester Grammar School he was entrusted to the parental care of one Mr. and Mrs. Diverlt a Latin Scholar of repute. The young scholar was also known as Aurobindo Ackroyd Gosh who found time to well read, Shakespeare, Shelly and Keats. From the record of progress that Aurobindo made at school specially in mastering not only the English but classics as well at so young an age was considered to be the feat of a prodigy. From Manchester to St. Pauls in London and then to Cambridge on a classical scholarship of £80 a month immediately placed him as a remarkable boy, whom Oscar Browning, then a noted figure at Cambridge welcomed with open arms. He passed with a first class distinction, the first part of the Tripos and Cambridge. He could have asked for a degree or sit for the second part of the examination, but he did neither. His father asked him to sit for the I.C.S. examination which he did and passed in 1890. But he would not sit for the riding test. Even at the early age of 10 or eleven he had been developing a sense of protest against the established order. That a period of general upheaval was soon to bring in the world and felt a resentment that foreign nation should rule his country. At Cambridge he was a member and latter a secretary of the Indian Majlis and made revolutionary speeches and during his last days he attended a private meeting of a secret Society to be formed to be known as the 'Lotus and Dagger'. When

Sri Aurobindo was disqualified for the Indian Civil Service, the Gaekwnr of Baroda was there and somehow through the intervention of Sri Henry Cotton, and his brother he was offered a post in Baroda Service and left England in 1893.

1893 to 1906 in Baroda were the days of intense preparation, reading, writing, talking, teaching holding classes, meditating, a real সারস্বত শাধক, with an intensity that can only be imagined with the fire in his soul burning higher and higher like his Vedic predecessors—One is staggered when one sees what stupendous introspective, God-gifted Man was absorbing—in English, Latin, Greek, French, German, Sanskrit, Bengali, Marathi, Guzrati. I would casually mention only a few events in his life as showing the trend of that it was 1887—a fifteen year old boy was selected to recite Words worth's "Cukoo" in the prize distribution ceremony of the St. Pauls School. He came back and wrote that night a poem himself whose first words were "hounds of the awakening world". Yes he had heard sounds of a new world of ideas, of values, of thought, of symphony, irrespective of creed, caste, colour or country and in 1950 the same poet told us in his Savitri, that magnum opus of his creative activity, a greater tale yet to be told of human and Divine endeavour, in words ringing with realization that Man.

"Shall reveal the Spirits Light and Might
And more to its destiny of felicity
Nature shall live to manifest secret God.
The spirit shall take up the human play
This earthly life becomes Life Divine,"

This was the age when an Encyclopaedic mind like his was lasting against the Congress mentality of petitioning of Bonnerjees and Banerjees, of Mehtas and Dadabhais, when he was writing 'New lamps for the Old (Indu Prakash 1894) when he was contemplating, a drama like Perseus the Deliverer which had as its theme that Man was a greater Divinity than

the Gods themselves at the Olympic heights—when he was reading Madhusudan and Bankim. Bankim was to him the poet who first with skill inspired did teach greatness to our Divine Bengali language. About Madhusudan he wrote, as we read the passage of that titanic personality (whose hero was neither Rama, not Ravana but Meghand) we seem to be listening again to the thunder scene in Lear or the some tragic pieces out of Thucydides, of Gibbon narrating the fall of majestic nations or the ruin of mighty Kings. No sensitive man can read it without being shaken to the very heart. About Bankim he wrote “And when posterity, comes to crown with her praises the makers of India, she will place her most splendid laurel not on sweating temples of a place hunting politicians nor on the narrow forehead of a noisy social reformer but on the serene brow of the gracious Bengali, who never clamoured for power but did his work in silence for love of his work even as nature does, and just because he had no aim but to give out the best that was in him, was able to create a language, a literature and a nation,” No greater compliment had been given to Bankim. Twelve years later in the fourth epoch of his life when he was known as the leader and inspirer of the Young Bengal’s extremist nationalist groups he wrote again in his paper ‘Bandemataram’ that the words Bandemataram had become a mantra and Bankim was its Rishi like Viswamitra or Vashista and he explained “The Rishi is different from the saint. His life may not have been distinguished by superior holiness nor his character by an ideal beauty. He is not great by what he was himself but by what he has expressed. A great and vivifying message had to be given to a nation or to humanity and God has chosen this month on which to shape the words of the message, A momentous vision had to be revealed ; and it is his eyes which almighty first unseals. The third and Supreme Service of Bankim to his nation was that he gave us the vision of the Mother. It was not a fare intellectual idea, a revisionist,

revivalism and expression of class consciousness but the Mother had revealed herself. I know and appreciate that such expressions today are anathema to certain brands of Socio-economic sponsors as opposed to dialectic history. I am not going in to the merits or demerits of such a proposition but historically such a challenge had to be met". This is not of political origin, but it has taken newer dimensions. It began almost two centuries ago with the prospect of a hapazard and superficial Westerization. This challenge had three facets :—

- (i) From the point of view of spiritual values, it was an attack against Hindu concept of ethics and values posed by Christianity, Utilitarianism and laterly by Brahmoism where it had an overdose of Christian learning and too much of anti-idolatry. Originally Brahmoism was in fact an attempt on the part of the body social to act as an antibody against this primary infection. Islam's crude attack was direct and frontal and different in texture and character.
- (ii) It was an attack against autochthonous and indigenous and natural social cultural manifestations, usages and habits. The native atmosphere was being broken.
- (iii) It wanted to create a slow merger of separate Indian national identity in the context of the British rule, and it was openly hunted by Englishmen and Indians alike that it was a short of a direct boon that the British should rule us. So we became emotionally excitable, nostalgically romantic and developed a fear complex. Repelled by the inferiority complex of the anglicized Indian, it developed equally unhealthy superiority complex of the orthodox Indian, who made an attempt to get out of the charmed circle of the Western culture, which he considered to be against the tenets of his creed.

An example of this is to be found in Sri Aurobindo's Bhabani Mandir pamphlet in which the influence of Bankim and Vivekananda is discernible. Sri Aurobindo pleads that our race has grown to be an old man with stores of knowledge, with ability to feel and desire but paralysed by senile sluggishness, senile timidity, senile feebleness. If Indian is to survive she must be made young again. So India has to be reborn and what is a nation but the Sakti of its millions, What is that so many Sadhus and Sanyasis have preached to us silently by their lives? What was the message that radiated from the personality of Bhagawan Ramakrishna. It is not mere cynicism to say that man, even after so many centuries of development and progress, has not yet succeeded in becoming his true self and reach true manhood except in the case of a few individuals. He has come in the evolution to embody and manifest fully the principle of Mind ; but since in the course of evolution he has arisen out of his preceding vegetable and animal stages, he has to carry a heavy load of his sub-human origin. Which not only dominates his body and vital nature but also influences strongly his mentality. As Sri Aurobindo has said : "His proneness to many kinds of inertia, his readiness to vegetable, his attachment to the Soil and clinging to his roots, to safe anchorages of all kinds, and in the other hand his nomadic and predatory impulses, his blind servility to custom and the rule of the pack, his mob-movements and openness to sub-conscious suggestions from the group-soul, his subjection to the yoke of rage and fear, his need of punishment and reliance on punishment, his inability to think and act for himself, his incapacity for true freedom, his distrust of novelty, his slowness to seize intelligently and assimilate, his downward propensity and earthward gaze,

Sri Aurobindo—Bhawani Mandir quoted in Purani's Life of Sri Aurobindo.

Kishore Gandhi—Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo pp. 189—191 and the New Age.

his vital and physical subjection to his heredity, all these and more are his heritage from the subhuman origins of his life and body and physical mind".¹ But if Man is still half animal on the lower side of his nature due to his evolutionary past, he is also half-god on his highest mental side and is destined to be the whole god in his evolutionary future. All the difficulties that now beset his life are due to the fact that he has in him this double nature which pulls him in contrary direction. He has not yet succeeded in freeing himself from the lower pull so as to compel his whole nature to obey the higher call and reshape his whole life in the image of his highest mental ideas. "He has effected something, he has passed a certain stage of his journey. He has laid some yoke of intellectual, ethical aesthetic rule on his vital and physical parts and made it impossible for himself to be content with or really to be the mere human animal. But more he has not been able to do successfully. The transformation of his life into the image of the true, the good and the beautiful seems as far off as ever; if ever he comes near to some imperfect form of it,—and even then it is only done by a class or by a number of individuals with some reflex action on the life of the mass,—he slides back from it in a general decay of his life, or else stumbles on from it into some bewildering upheaval out of which he comes with new gains indeed but also with serious losses. He has never arrived at any great turning-point, any decisive crisis of transformation."²

The root cause of man's incapacity to transform his vital and physical life with the mental reason itself is an intermediary and instrumental power of existence. "The mind and the intellect are not the key power of our existence. For they only trace out a round of half truths and the uncertainties

1. The Human Cycle pp. 87-88.

(a) The Life Divine, p. 933.

1. The Human Cycle, p. 303.

2. The Human Cycle, pp. 292-93.

and revolve in that unsatisfying circle". "Mind is not the destined arch-angle of the transformation."

The significance of the present movement of earth's history is that the pressure on man to make a decisive choice of his evolutionary destiny has reach a critical point. As Sri Aurobindo puts it : "At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny.

It is because the pressure of this crisis is becoming more and more acute that there is such wide spread tension and unrest in the world today. As the Mother says :

"One thing appears evident that humanity has arrived at a certain stage of general tension—tension in effort, tension in action, tension in everyday life—and at a overactivity so excessive, a restlessness. So wide-spread that the whole human race seems to have reached a point where either one has to break through a resistance and rise into a new consciousness or fall back into an abyss of obscurity and inertia. This tension is so entire and general that something obviously has to break up. That cannot continue in this way."¹

Since the whole issue of earth-evolution and of human destiny depended on this Power, which he named Supermind, Sri Aurobindo made it the sole mission of his life to realise it in himself so as to manifest it effectively in the earth-nature and humanity. With what grim earnestness he pursued this task can be seen from his own words :

"It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Super mind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, there is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision It is a question between the Divine and

1. Bulletin of Physical Education, August 1958.

myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Super mind, no hunting for greatness for myself or other.”¹

“It was inevitable that in the course of the Sadhana these inferior parts of the nature should be brought forward in order that like the rest of the being they may make the crucial choice and either accept or refuse transformation. My whole work depends upon this movement ; it is the decisive or deal of this yoga for the physical consciousness and the material life cannot change if this does not change. Nothing that may have been done before, no inner illumination, experience, power of Ananda is of any eventual value if this is not done. If the little external personality is to persist in retaining its obscure and limited, its petty and ignoble, its selfish and false and stupid human consciousness, this amounts to a flat negation of the work and the Sadhana. I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco, a partial and transient spiritual opening within with no true and radical change in the law of the external nature. If, then, any Sadhak refuses in practice to admit this change or if he refuses even to admit the necessity for any change of his lower vital being and his habitual external personality, I am entitled to conclude that, what ever his professions, he has not accepted either myself or my yoga.”² As a writer of today puts it “In the 19th century the problem was that God was dying, in the 20th century the problem is that Man is dying.” In between we tried to make a reconciliation between God and Man by saying Man, was God and God was Man, Jiva Siva,

1. Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother pp. 214—15.

2. On Yoga II, Tome Two, pp. 405—406.

Siva Jiva or Daridra Narayan, Vishwamanaba. Sri Aurobindo conceived of the possibility of a Supramental descent to change the character of the world so that Man may arise and God may descend. As Sri Aurobindo says—

Two powers from original ecstasy born
 Pace, near but parted in the life of man
 One leans to the Earth the other yearns to the skies
 Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect Earth
 Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect Heaven
 Receive him into boundless Savitri
 Lose thyself into Infinite Satyavan

That inscribes the long romance of God and Man, of Thee and Me. This conception of Existence as a wider orbit including both life and death necessitated revaluation of all experience.

We thought that we had got a complete answer to all our problems and this religion of Man or humanism was enough. But two world wars and higher technological development at a pace well nigh terrific is shattering even this sense of humanism. It is not killing men but Man. In the 19th century inhumanity meant cruelty, in the twentieth it means schizoid self alienation. The danger of the past was that men became slaves, the danger of the future is that we are becoming automations. True enough, robots do not rebel except at a particular man's behest or that the forces so collected and arranged may become engines of destruction to escape the boredom of a meaningless life. Doctrinaire regimentation, right or wrong, has also to be taken as a big factor. I do not know what superscience in an atomic age will teach or what individual 'I' will get by being

an automaton but this is a question which I put in the words of the scientists who gave evidence in the Oppenheimer trial a few years ago—Here then is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable. Shall we put an end to the human race or shall mankind renounce them ? The light of a thousand stars is now in man's hands. It should light up the world and its civilisation and not plunge them into total darkness. The issue today is not whether Religion has a future but has Man a future ? Can we expect the liberation of the human spirit to lead to new splendours, new beauties, new sublimities, to a new creature altruism ?

This thought is all the most uppermost today when we stand face to face with a crisis of civilisation, where the Unvanquished Man has yet to recover his lost human heritage ? The issue before Indian Culture is not simply the creation of a national state or art or literature or a proletariat democracy but to have an integral approach to the problems of life as a whole. That, I would call the Vedantic approach which would create a renaissance which may synthesise the vital social urges under the surface of turmoil with the attempt to create new value in a world where the starvation of the Spirit is manifest, where the plenty promised by plans and planners has not percolated to the lowly and the lost, to the disinherited and disabled, where the very basis of human existence is still a matter of speculation to be engulfed by power, pride or prejudice. The world still hungers for a voice which would overleap the frontiers of nations and classes over the din and bustle of tanks and bombers, where one could say with Rolland—I will not rest when each will meet with each, class with class, knowledge with knowledge, ism with ism, endeavour with endeavour.

When the mind would be without fear
And the head would be held high
Where knowledge would be free
Where the world would not be broken into fragments
By narrow domestic walls

Where the words would come from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving would stretch its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason would not lose its way
Into dreary sands of habit
Where Mind would be led by thee into ever widening
Thought and Action
Into that Heaven of freedom, my father let my country awake.

This is a true Vedantin's prayer. This is no doubt poetry
but what is a true poet but a legislator for the future.

XIII

Since Tennyson sang a hundred years ago of the "Parliament of Man and the Federation of the World," we have progressed towards an Emerging World Community more by compulsion of facts, by the curious admixture of heterogenous elements, of fear and hate, war and annihilation, atomic fission and nuclear bombardment as also by the need of mutual help and assistance, technological progress and scientific development. The 'one world' idea has come closer. But there are conflicting political and social ideologies, a clash in loyalty between national and supernational ideas and ideals, the lack of a better international order. As Friedmann points out "The national state still claims political and legal sovereignty, including the right to

solve conflicts with other nations by war ; it claims the loyalties of its citizens to an extent ultimately incompatible with allegiance to humanity at large, and it means a host of economic, social and cultural frontiers which in a world which desperately needs understanding among the ordinary citizens of different nations, strangles the free flow and interchange of ideas as well as of persons and goods."

This is mainly to-day's content and concept of an Emerging World Community—bound by ties not only of mutual help, co-operation and co-ordination but also by ideas of mutual solution of disputes by talks, negotiations and settlement in international forums without resort to arms or by arbitrations as also help and assistance from developed to under-developed countries, by men, money (foreign exchange), technical know-how and personnel (e.g. Colombo Plans, Exchange of Scholars, Commonwealth Scholarships, Grants by Rockefeller, Ford Foundations etc. Loans by W. B. R. D., and other organisations in the Public & Private Sectors, different Collaboration Schemes). Distance is being conquered by quick transport in super Jets and Boeings. One can have his morning tea in Calcutta, lunch in London and take his dinner in New York in course of the day. But the idea of a Nation State still holds good. It is still the most effective legal, political and social organisation. It has two elements—an organizing and a coercive power. The unifying factors is race, language, territory, religion, economic interests or a common tradition, a rich heritage of memories with a common agreement to live together. "The existence of a nation" Renan used to say in 1882 "is a daily plebiscite" and many in under-developed countries still swear by the cult of nationalism. The functions of the Nation-State have been metamorphosed by two wars. The doctrine of laissez-faire with which we were familiar in the nineteenth century have through the impact of two world wars and a growing maladjustment in population and resources has collapsed and the State is now a most interfering body.

If we go back to pre-history, man's gregariousness, herd-instinct, self-preservation, sexual and parental attachment, first made a family biologically necessary to him. From the family to the tribe, as the dominant social unit was but a step in early history. The dominant pattern of social behaviour was co-operation within the unit which was lauded to the skies and indifference or opposition outside, often relentless and followed by blood baths.

The idea expanded. From the loyalty to the family (the pater familias or magnum mater) we come to the loyalty to the clan or the tribe and its warriors or headmen. The successful leader became King by divine right and claimed descent from the Sun or the Moon or the Gods. (Even in historical days Charles I ruled because Henry VIII had won the battle of Bosworth). The dominant ones in the clan (the Brahamans and Kshattriyas in India, Samurais in Japan, Jewish Priests in Israeil, Knights Crusaders in the Middle Ages became the rulers). In ancient Greek city states there were democrats and oligarchs as well as freemen and slaves.

The idea still further expanded when we got communities composed of men and women claiming descent from a particular parentage or residing within a strict geographical area or following a particular pattern of worship.

Thoughts like—we Christians, or we followers or prophet belong to an identical world of values, of passion and prejudice, were but forerunners of similar thoughts of the Third International—working men of all countries unite—Social or religious cohesion is often preceded by a political or religious attachment.

Plato's republic envisaged the collapse of the family. To-day's world republic contemplates the breakdown of the national states in the interest of international peace and prosperity. We have seen in the nineteenth century, the end of many congresses of European nations, in the twentieth we have seen how the League of Nations was obliterated. We now see the uncomfortable position of the United Nations (A member



state has just withdrawn as did South Africa a few years ago, Communist China was not within its fold for many years and there are warring factions not only between this and that bloc and the emergence of new Afro-Asian nations have created newer problems.)

The idea of nationalism, slogans such as,—my country right or wrong—is still a powerful force to reckon with. It has an emotional appeal and an immediate value. The Nineteenth Century's contribution to world thought was the idea of nationalism. As Bertrand Russell points out it was thought to be a natural phenomenon. The story of a Joan of Arc, or the Wars of Religion in Europe, the prosperity of Elizabethan England, the American War of Independence their declaration of rights, the great French Revolution with its trinity call of 'Egalite, Liberte, Fraternite,' doctrines of social contract preached by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Henry Devid Thoreau, Hegel and Karl Marx all contributed to this. Adam Smith and the idea of Wealth of Nation added an economic spur. Napoleon's wars brought a national feeling to the Germans and the Russians. Metternich gave it to the Italians. The cohesion of a national state like Britain having international burdens overseas—based on a symbol and a legend that Britannia ruled the waves laid the foundations of a supra-national egoism. Some complained (Lenin) that imperialism was but the highest stage of capitalism. Hobson also talked of economic domination of weaker nations. There had not then been Afro-Asian revival or nascence, though Japan was slowly being influenced (vide Captain Parry's expedition) and there were soft murmurs of nationalistic feeling in India and elsewhere.

That was the position at the beginning of the twentieth century. There was a sharp cleavage between the West and the East, of the 'haves' and 'havenots', of the 'developed' and 'undeveloped' countries, of the affluents and the non-affluents. The political basis was bound to differ according to the needs.

At home it was democratic, outside it was mainly autocratic even based on a sense of mission. Seely referred to it and people like Rudyard Kipling thought that the twain would never meet. The system of government which we call old colonialism—be it of the British, French, German or Dutch variety, though different in texture and content according to the culture,—they came into contact with, was biassed by these trends of social collapse and disintegration.

But the main strata of thought which had emerged not only in the developed West but which had percolated to the Silken and sleepy East, also was the phrase coined by Jefferson "Govt. of the people, by the people and for the people". That was the basic idea with which we started in the twentieth century. We have however to take note of the fact that even in the nineteenth century with the growth of industrial revolution and higher technological order and scientific development, people have begun to think otherwise. Godwin, Proudhon, Engels, Marx, Mazzini, Hegel, Kossuth, Bakunin, Warren, Thoreau, Tucker, Kropotkin, Sorel, Tolstoy were talking of "*La Coquette dupas*", of "Fields, factories and workshops", of 'mutual aid' of 'law and authority', of state, and its historic role, of its myth, of 'nihilism and anarchism' of 'syndicalism and socialism'. Karl Marx envisaged a bitter class struggle. He proclaimed that the working classes out of historic necessity must make a bid for power and bring about social and political changes through the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. His philosophy of economic determinism and the doctrine of surplus value closely followed Hegel's interpretation of history. The manifesto issued by him whether we agree with it or not is still a force after a century. But the God that failed was not the God that was idolized. The interests of the few who care for higher values in life have to be identified with those of the many who need bread. The elites and the proletariat differed. This identification and rapprochement have to be on a basis of mutual trust and confidence and not on

an ideological war. In India our struggle with our rulers, though it passionately idolized a national state also conceived of an international recovery of faith as Sorokin puts it and men who were in the forefront of the struggle like Mahatma Gandhi, or Pandit Nehru or idealists like Tagore or Vivekananda, thought in terms of an international order, amity and co-operation. This gave our nationalist movement a human touch, raised it above the creed of a narrow nationalism and avoided a bitterness which we still see enacted in many Afro-Asian countries which are being liberated. The one aim of philosophical method to quote the words of Bertand Russell is "lessening of fanaticism with an increasing capacity of sympathy and mutual understanding".

Many believe that history is not determined by blind economic forces which control the individual. Man's creative genius has played and does play a crucial role in historical development. In India in its role of nationalism, it was the middle class which constituted the social mainstay with the mass providing the background music and singing the chorus. I know that a caveat will be entered that the so-called educated middle class still linger in the twilight of a feudal patriarchal culture tradition and we care not so much the idea of social justice as a promise of the fulfilment of the lust for power.

To sum up—we have today arrived at a world picture where developed, developing and economically and politically unstable groups have to be entwined together, with varying degrees of prosperity, a mounting population, a higher technological order and need for peace in an atomic age. We have established that if we are to move towards a fraternity of world community certain basic needs have to be met irrespective of colour, caste or creed or the nature of social philosophy we subscribe to i. e.

- (a) the minimum of needs for human life (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, medical and educational needs) have to be guaranteed.

- (b) Special privileges and castes should disappear.
- (c) The sovereignty of the people cannot be disputed,
- (d) The idea of an international co-ordination and world control as through an organisation like the United Nations must prevail.
- (e) Disarmament, abolition of war and a stable world polity. Men like Aldous Huxley and George Orwell have envisaged behaviour patterns as in 1984 or in the Brave New World. As Louis Fischer said "Did the pros equal the cons, glorifying steel and Kilowat collectives and creches against the world of dreams."

Our study of the nineteenth century Bengal may try to find seeds of this quest in Vedanta as a social force, in a co-operative struggle between the East and the West.

Appendix I

“Vivekananda-Nivedita-Rabindranath”

Vivekananda-Nivedita-Rabindranath are three names which serve as beacon lights in the history of the early years of this century. To-day, safely entrenched in the seventh decade of the century, behind the barrage of a free India, we do not perhaps realise the tremendous impact of these three outstanding personalities and their acknowledged role in the growth not only of a nationalist revival in Bengal but in the evolution of the concept of a greater India ; it is said that between Vivekananda and Rabindranath there was but little contact and little contiguity of thought. Each was great in his own way and the twain did rarely meet. Did Nivedita, the great spiritual daughter and disciple of Swamiji who was a friend of Rabindranath also act as an unconscious or sub-conscious link in the chain ? It has often been stated that the poet had but few bouquets for the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement and in his too sensitive and seismographic mind there were but a few records of the undulation. I would therefore begin with the end, quote the remarkable tribute which the poet paid to Shri Ramakrishna as published in the Modern Review of April, 1937 at the time of his century celebrations in the Parliament of Religions.

“I do not know if I can be called religious in the current sense of the term, not claiming as my possession any particular idea of God authorised by some time-honoured institution. If, in spite of all this, I have accepted this honour, it is only out of respect to the memory of the great saint with whose centenary the present Parliament is associated. I venerate Paramhamsadeva because he, in an arid age of religious nihilism, proved the truth of our spiritual heritage by realising

it, because the largeness of his spirit could comprehend seemingly antagonistic modes of Sadhana and because the simplicity of his soul shames for all time the pomp and pedantry of pontiffs and pundits. I have nothing new to tell you, no esoteric truth to propound to you, I am a mere poet, a lover of men and of creation. But since love gives a certain insight I may perhaps claim to have sometimes caught the hushed voice of humanity and felt its suppressed longing for the Infinity."

In a remarkable poem of this time, the poet made a declaration of his faith.

Do not ask me what is liberation or what is it
 I am not a Sadhak
 I am but a poet. I stand very near the world
 and its worldiness on this side of life's stream,
 In the front meanders the river
 with its flow and ebb.
 It moves on swift current
 Taking good and evil, shadow and darkness,
 Waves splash on the life's board
 Love and light
 In the sands of time,
 My heart leaps up in that music and dance ;
 That spark of breath which weaves
 Life's joys and sorrows, its passion
 of pride and praise
 Its tears and laughter
 That I have caught in my lute.

To put it in the same words as Andre Gide would do,—
 'it is the testimony of a great visionary who looked at life
 with serenity'. In the poet's religion we find no doctrine
 or injunction but the attitude of our entire being towards a
 truth which is ever to be revealed in its own endless creation.

In dogmatic religion all questions are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. But the poet's religion is fluid like the atmosphere round the earth where light and shadows play hide and seek..... It never undertakes to lead anybody anywhere to any solid conclusion, yet it reveals endless spheres of light because it has no wall round itself.

Nineteenth century in India was an age of impact, of curious amalgam when new wine was being poured into old bottles and the stirring within was transmitted and transmuted mainly through a progressive outlook towards a comprehensive and creative idealism not essentially divorced from the basic trends of old achievements, old ideas and ideals. This acceptance of the new with the old or what the West had to give with the best of the East was one great contribution which Bengal made to India and India to the world under the inspiring guidance of its stalwarts from Rammohan onwards. This galaxy of gallants included two big names at the end of the century—Rabindranath Tagore who was coming up as a man of destiny and Swami Vivekananda who had just established himself in America—two distinct types, inheritors of fulfilled and unfulfilled renown, almost parallel entities in a parallelogram of forces. These two names may be taken as the symbol of the forces that enriched Bengal's mind in the first two decades of the 20th century. Both of them acknowledged their debt to Western thought, and science, both were conscious of our wide shortcomings and failures, both were India minded in their own way. Both were strong nationalists with international outlook, both had a historical sense, a broad sense of human values, and faith in the religion of man, in the divinity of humanity and humanity of divinity. Both loved music and art, talked of Buddha and Siva, of the untouchables and proletariat classes. Yet though they broadly met at what I call the India lobby, their mental attitude, their treatment of the subject were different. We may almost requote what Jawharlal said of Tagore and Gandhi as

applicable with some deviation to Rabindranath and Vivekananda—

Tagore and Vivekananda have undoubtedly been two outstanding and dominating figures in the first quarter of the twentieth century Bengal. No two persons could be so different from one another in their makeup or temperament. Tagore, the aristocratic artist, turned democrat with proletarian sympathies, represented essentially the rich cultural tradition of India, the tradition of accepting life in fullness thereof..... Swamiji, though coming from the upper middle class was more a man of the people, represented another ancient tradition of renunciation and asceticism. Yet Tagore was primarily the weaver of imageries, Swamiji of concentrated and ceaseless activity. Both had a world outlook and both were at the same time Indian. They seemed to represent different but harmonious aspects and complemented one another. Vivekananda of course passed away early at a comparatively young age in 1902 and there is no recorded evidence of a contact or a compact between the poet and either Ramakrishna or Vivekananda or the sponsors of that particular movement except once at a party which Nivedita gave. Yet the poet's mind was like a seismograph and would record subconsciously and undulation of a mental pendulum. From the day that Vivekananda came back to Calcutta and the ovation he got from the old and the young and particularly the young, the cultural atmosphere of the country was surcharged by his dynamic and colourful personality. It is improbable that the poet would not react to this impact particularly when in essence except for one or two deep fissures in the respective angles of vision there was an identity more profound and more fundamental than is popularly claimed.

That identity takes us back to the old Upanishadic ideals and the nineteenth century concept of India as well as to a sense of broad humanism which the West was gradually

evolving. Added to this was a fondness for Buddha and what he taught. In Europe history has been regarded as the record of political growth of a nation as in England ultimately personified as a state and history considered as the biography of this collective personality. Speaking of the great French historian Michelat, Bendette Croce recalls his fantastic idealisation of France as a physical, intellectual and moral person. Froude and Freeman in England, Treitskhe in Germany are examples of the sponsors of this type of history. But history is not an exact science, nor can it be put either in the musical chair of Hegel, the empirical astrology of Spengler, the assimilative pattern of Toynbee or the factual outersheel of a propaganda machine of an analytical historian like Tacitus, Gibbons, Macaulay, V. Smith or Jaiswal.

As a distinguished writer says "when Gibbon wrote about Trajan, Hadrian and the Antonines, what human race and its prosperity he was talking about? Have we any evidence? We have the sublime meditation of Marcus Aurelius but no diaries of his countless subjects who had greater need of his stoicism..... We have the exalted tragedies of Aeschylus but to what extent they exalted the citizens of Athens. More often than not, the temper of this age and the values put on the same, condition the assumptions made. History to-day has lengthened, deepened and widened in its scope and nature. If as we believe, the history of a people lies in their social, economic and mental evolution, through ages, then the material for it lies not merely in the discoveries of archaeologists and epigraphists, but in their national expressions such as art, religion, literature and in their co-relation of the forces generated by the clash, as Prof. Toynbee points out—the challenge, response, assimilation, be it of the dominant minority or the internal proletariat or an external force. In addition, there is the part played by emotional or subconscious element of our nature which give rise to events in the assessment



of human history,—how and why certain facts developed in the way they did.

It is a fact that both Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda had in earlier days come into contact with Maharshi Debendranath, that patriarch of the Brahma Samaj movement.

One has also incidentally to remember an unique fact of history—dominance of the Tagore family in intellectual and cultural life of Calcutta for well over a century in an unbroken succession, say from 1815-1941. It is stated that when he first saw Maharshi, Shri Ramakrishna asked him to bare his breast and saw yogi's sign and said — you are in the world but your mind rests on the heights of God. Tell me something of Him. And Debendranath recited to him some of the beautiful passages of the Vedas—This universe is to be likened to a candlebra — and each one of us is a bulb. If we do not burn, the whole candlebra becomes dark. There was a later visit of May 2, 1883 when he apparently was not courteously received. There is evidence of Swamiji visiting Debendranath and later saw him with Nivedita on his return from America. Maharshi had written to Swamiji also congratulating him on his American success. We are not aware whether these contacts had any effect on Rabindranath, but we know that Vivekananda was enamoured of Rabindranath's songs and the one he used to sing to Paramhamsadeva, was "I have made you my life's loadstar". It is also a fact that Rabindranath was leading the choir in the marriage ceremony of Krishna Kumar Mitra where one of the leading participants in vocal music was Narendranath. S. Kshiti Mohon Sen also says that his first acquaintance with Rabindra Sangit was through songs sung by Swamiji. We know also from S. Bhupendra Nath Dutta that in their family there used to be sung a rhymed couplet concerning Tagore family.

But the fact remains that in Rabindranath's writings, his lectures or his notes of this period there is a discreet silence



about Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and the movement they led for reasons into which we need not go—ideological similarities and differences notwithstanding. At this stage enters into the Indian scene a lady who was unique in more ways than one, in more respects than one. She was Miss Margaret Noble—commonly known as Sister Nivedita of the Ramakrishna—Vivekananda. For a proper appreciation of the position we have to transport ourselves to a winter evening in London,—a cold Sunday afternoon in November and the place, a West End drawing room. The Swamiji was seated facing a half circle of listeners, with the fire on the hearth behind him. These are Nivedita's own words describing the Master as she saw him first. He sat in his crimson robe—the words were like magic incantations — Shiva—Shiva—wearing the look of mingled gentleness and loftiness, that one sees in the faces of those who live much in meditation, the look that Raphael had painted for us in the brow of the sistine child. The first seed was sown—Man proceeds from truth to truth and not from error to truth and the fact that He comes—He is born again and again.

Nivedita had recognised the heroic fibre of the man and his character and accepted him as 'Master' and desired to make herself the servant of his love for his own people. Two years 1896 and 1897 passed. Vivekananda gave her ample time to make up her mind analyse her thoughts and take a decision. He later wrote to her. It was only in 1898 that she landed in India to be the servant of the cause her Master espoused. Swamiji said that he had plans for the women of his own country in which she could be of great help to him..... and added "I will stand by you unto death, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up vedanta or remain in it." It reminds us of Rabindranath's excellent poem

Fear not, I live near
I will show you the way



In the dark night of the soul, clasp my hand
If you feel afraid.

Already in July 1897 Swamiji had written to her — Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work of India. What is wanted is not a man but a woman, a real lioness to work for Indians, women especially. Indian cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all your celtic blood make you just the woman wanted. She came to Calcutta and soon became acquainted with the elite of the town, a dynamic woman as she was devoted to the cause of the people. Rabindranath Tagore came to know of her. Pre-Vivekananda death period would cover only 4 years—say from 1898-1902 and of which a considerable portion had been spent by her travelling in India as well as in England. The second period of her contact with the poet was from 1902 till her death in 1911 onwards. Nivedita was dead and gone before Rabindranath stepped into the world canvas.

To Nivedita, Vivekananda was the modern mind in its completeness—she found in him the hope for humanity—"I see in him the heir to the spiritual discoveries and religious struggles of innumerable teachers and saints in the past of India and the world and at the same time the pioneer and prophet of a new and future order of development. When others would talk of ways and means, he knew how to light a fire. Where others gave directions, he would show the thing itself."

Nivedita clearly records the reasons for his acceptance of Swamiji, firstly the breadth of his religious culture, secondly the great intellectual newness and interest of the thought he had brought to us and thirdly the fact that his call was sounded in the name of that which was strongest and finest and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements

in man. In her 'Master as I saw Him', in her 'Web of Indian Life', in the 'Notes of Some Wanderings' the ideal relationship became the real. She added "Mine is the broken and faltering witness."

Nivedita was perhaps the only direct disciple of Vivekananda with whom Rabindranath came into contact. And that was not her only passport. She had won her access to the innermost heart of our society. The term India to her was not a geographical or ethnic entity, not a clan, caste or blood group, not a subject country, not a black show. She was not a white woman in search of a black God, but India was an idea, an ideal, a legend, a symbol, a movement, a thought, a summation without the tyranny of geography. So when this remarkable lady came into contact with a mastermind like Rabindranath, it was but natural that she would impress him and imprint on him unconsciously some of the ideas and ideals of her Master. That Rabindranath was impressed, as many other great men were, is evident from the most unique tribute he paid to her on her death. She was 'Lokmata'—The People's Mother to him. To Sri Aurobindo—She was 'Shikhamoyee' all a-fire, to Jagadish Chandra and Lady Bose a trusted friend. She was a friend philosopher and guide to Gokhale and Tilak and 'Mahashewta' to Abanindranath and Nandalal. Youngmen of the Dawn Society swore by her. Lady Minto was a personal friend as well as Woodroffe and Beachcroft.

Long after her death Rabindranath wrote "Women possess one thing—that is their internal strength which is emotion. When it mingles with character, it becomes superb. That is what happened in the case of Nivedita. She almost came to worship Vivekananda. That is why she could adopt his faith and way of life. She forsook everything—her country, her people, her family. I was really staggered by her courage and amazed by her self-sacrifice. I used to go to Nivedita's place very often. If the emotion of women were

merely perched on a sentimental plane it was liable to disintegrate and degenerate but if it were built on the solid base of pure character it could establish "truth" in itself." That was the impression of the poet just before his death. He said this to Maitreyi Debi in Mungpoo. Earlier he had referred to her as the worshipper of Siva—Siva who lives in the dilapidated huts of the have-nots, the weary and the afflicted, in the neglected and unhonoured and unsung quarters of the country.

The poet also wrote an introduction to the 2nd Edn. of Nivedita's Web of Life—it was dedicated to Partick Geddes and Romesh Dutt "She had won her access to the inmost heart of our society.....She came to know us by becoming one of ourselves."

Ratcliffe of the Statesman another trusted friend of Nivedita stated that she had no doubt as to the capacity of the Indian mind and character to emerge.

Some writers such as Lezel Reme or Girija Sankar Roy Chaudhuri have pointed Nivedita more as an underground worker, a friend of the revolutionaries but she was a true disciple of the Master, more than one sided in her activities and who would forget her splendid work in the Plague epidemics and who would not remember her soul-stirring books? Nivedita's own dictum was "Religion is not confined to Sadhana, Tapasya in not a matter of Thakurghar. Humanity is one. Each part of it is necessary to all."

In Rolland's interpretation of India, he refers not merely to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda but also to three other leaders of Indian thought, the King of Thinkers, the King of Masses and the King of Poets, Aurobindo, Gandhi and Rabindranath. He showed how the first two had publicly acknowledged their debt to Vivekananda. As for Tagore, Rolland's explanation was that his Goethe like genius stood at the junction of all the rivers of India and it was permissible to presume that in him we reunited and harmonised two

currents of the Brahma Samaj transmitted to him by his father the Maharshi and of the new Vedantism of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rich in both, free in both, he has serenely wedded the East and the West in his own spirit. From the social and national point of view the only public announcement of his ideas was, if I am not mistaken, about 1906 at the beginning of the Swadeshi Movement. There is no doubt that the truth of such a forerunner must have played some part in his evolution particularly about divinity of man and essential. Spirituality of life culminating later in his Religion of Man and the divinity of humanity and humanity of divinity which he had evolved in his Hibbert lectures. He said in no uncertain words "The solitary enjoyment of the Infinite in meditation no longer satisfied me and the texts which I had used for my silent worship lost their inspiration without my knowing it. I am sure I vaguely felt my need was spiritual self-realisation in the life of man through some disinterested service". His pathetic belief in Man the great was however not the concept which arose from an ethical union based on values liberated from the time honoured spiritual bondage. To-day's humanism would speak of a rediscovery of the essence of Man's nature. Man was a focal point there but his reason was a biological heritage and not a metaphysical category. Again in Tagore's concept of Man, emphasis was on the Universal Man, not on God the poor, (Daridra Narayan) and not on God the wicked, God the miserable. In Sri Aurobinda's parlour talks this question was once raised—He explained—It is not the same as 'Jana Sadharan'. In the Viswa Manab' all the best people as well as the lowest of humanity are included. Perhaps in the Jana Sadharan, only the lowest remain. Vivekananda, however, as some disciple of Sri Aurobindo added—we had at least the idea of Narayana while serving them.

We may compare Rabindranath's

Through centuries past

The load of infamy is on you



Yet you do not bow to the God in Man
 with your eyes lowered
 You fail to see him
 That the Lord is sitting in the dust
 with the lowly and the lost.

The question now arises what part if any and it must have been a silent pervasive one, was played by Nivedita in this rapprochement. As I said before she first met Vivekananda in 1895 Nov. She met him again in 1896. She became a regular member of the Vedanta classes, expressed a desire to come to India to serve the Master's cause. Swamiji was in search of a lioness so to say. 1897 passed also. Swamiji gave his disciple enough time to realise that full import of her identification, that she would have to suffer not only misery, privation, but loss of even in reputation. Yet she came, it was a dedication, dedication to a cause—the cause of India. Ramakrishna became a legend and Swamiji the symbol of that faith. Within two months of her coming in January 1898, Swamiji formally gave her initiation—25th March the day sacred to the memory of coming Christ, when after performing Siva Pujah she was given Buddha sermons. That was the year the summer of which was spent with the Awakener of Souls—her guru. The pilgrimmage to Almora, Kashmir, Amarnath, Kshir Bhabani, was exhilarating. At Kshir Bhabani the terrific realisation of Kali the Mother came to Vivekananda. We read —

The stars are blotted out
 The clouds are covering clouds
 It is darkness, vibrant, sonant
 In the roaring whirling wind
 Are the souls of a million lunatic
 Dancing mad with joy
 Come, O Mother come

It was written in a fever of inspiration. To him the Mother did come. There was no way but love—love in a higher, purer

sense as of Vasista for Viswamitra. She returned in November, 1898. Between Nov. 1898 and June 1899—she must have made more than formal acquaintance of the Tagores—Rabindranath and Abanindranath, possibly with Havell and Okakura. We know also of her plague work and how Rabindranath was associated with it. Abanindranath writes that Rabi Kaka along with Nivedita was making house to house visits and giving instructions for anti-plague measures. The first formal intimation is a letter from Nivedita from Bose Para Lane, Baghbazar, dated June 16, 1899. The letter is addressed as my dear Mr. Tagore and says “you are so dear to my friend Dr. Bose that I could not help hoping you should be, my friend too. The letter is at p. 146 of Rabindranath’s letters vol. VI. It is interesting to note that about this time both Swamiji and Rabindranath were getting interested in the scientific researches of another great man—Jagadish Chandra Bose and wanted to help him. Nivedita was almost a link between Jagadish Chandra and both Vivekananda and Rabindranath. Nivedita gave to Rabindranath a long report of what she was able to do for Jagadish Chandra. She left Calcutta on the 20th June 1899 and reached London at the end of July. A few weeks later, Swamiji crossed over to America when she joined him in September. She was with him in America for a short period and they were in Britany together for a fortnight in the following year. She never again had a long unbroken opportunity of being with the Master who returned to India towards the end of 1900. She did not till 1902, in the July of which year Swamiji passed away. So her contacts with Rabindranath must have been naturally few and far between. Moreover this was precisely the period in the poet’s life when he in collaboration with Brahmabandhab Upadhaya was establishing his school where men would gather for the highest end of life in the peace of nature where we were bidden to realise man’s world as God’s kingdom where the sunrise and sunset and the silent glory of the stars would have their joyous recognition

from man ; where the young and the old, the teacher and the taught would sit at the same table to partake of their daily food and the food of their eternal life and realise that children were living people, more living than grownups who had built their shells of habit.

We can assume therefore not unreasonably that Nivedita's impact on Rabindranath as the exponent and purveyor of Vivekananda in thought, ideas and ideals was slight during the pre-Vivekananda period, but independently of that, and a great artist and cultural leader as Rabindranath was, he was developing his own synthesis of values in a rich rapturous and resonant fashion and shaping a philosophy of life, an evolution of a Jiban devata which was his own. We may assume that he had by this time developed a healthy respect for certain aspects of Vivekananda's line of action and social synthesis, particularly those which had their origin in the upanishadic texts though his ideal was more on the lines of Upanishadic Rishikula and not the monastic yellow Ochre, against which he was sometimes lashing in fury. We have also seen a letter which was in the possession of Shrimati Nag written to her father the most revered doyen of Indian journalists, Sri Ramananda Chatterjee which gives Maharshi's version of the Ramakrishna movement which must have coloured Rabindranath's imagination. This was also the time when he was writing—

Is that so, everything is Maya—
call it Illusion. It comes and vanishes
only Thou exist. Nothing else is there
If the universe dreams a dream whose dream is it ?

His philosophy centred on :

Where you are in unison with the universe
there I am in communion with you
Not in forests, not in solitude,
Not even in the privacy of one's soul,



where you meet others
there you are my own.

This verse was of course written later but a critical examination of Rabindranath's writings show that since the nineties of the last century he was nursing these ideas and ideals. It was at this stage of his mental evolution that there burst into the Indian firmament a shooting meteor. This baby bambino, the little Christ of Shri Ramakrishna whose artistic nature and Bohemian temperament, to quote Brojendra Nath Seal, had bemused people, became famous overnight and not only that, in course of a few years only built up an edifice which has flowered into the vast organisation of to-day and left an immortal legacy of love and respect, of selfless work and devotion.

There is no need, to dramatise this spiritual father-daughter relation which was wholly impersonal "in a yearning love of God in an anguished pursuit of the Infinite." To her he was, "the Awakener of Souls". One holds himself as a servant, another as brother, friend or comrade, a third may even regard the master personality as that of a beloved child. Nivedita said clearly "The only claim that I can make is that I was able to enter sufficiently into the circuit of my master's energy". Romain Rolland has spoken of St. Clara in relation to St. Francis and St. Juliana. We know the divine inebriation of the Christian mystics. We have hundreds of our lady saints such as Mirabai, Godda Devi (Audal) and others. In a poem called 'Prayer' Nivedita wrote

O Krishna, thou loving shepherd of the people
Buddha, Lord of Infinite companion
Jesus, Thou lover and saviour of the soul
Ramakrishna, Thou face of the Divine Mother
and Vivekanand of the mighty heart
Receive and save this soul



Keep her in Thine own presence
O Lord God, And let light perpetual shine upon her.

In the Master as I saw Him (p 110) Nivedita vividly realises like flashes from the beacon fire, that in India our teachers “destroy in us a personal relation in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision in its place”. The thoughts of the Master become seeds and germinate in the minds of the people. It reminds us of Sankaracharya’s famous lines in Dakshinamurti stotra.

Now we come to the post-Vivekananda period of her contact with Rabindranath from 1902 onwards. It is a fact as Sourin Mukherji tells us that the poet presided over a condolence meeting of Excelsior Union which was addressed by him as well as Nivedita a report of which was published in the Bengali of July 1902. Within a few days of Swamiji’s death Nivedita had cut herself off from the Ramakrishna Mission and was free to pursue her own work in her own way. The poignant memory of Swamiji inviting Nivedita to a last lunch reminds us of the last supper. Nivedita now got herself busy with her school and other work and got into contact more and more with other friends, co-workers and helpers. We must reckon Rabindranath as one of them. There are two pieces of evidence—one a letter dated April 18, 1903 from 9 Elysium Row and another, a tour diary of Oct., 1904 from Dr. Jadunath Sarkar. We have a graphic description of how Jagadish Chandra, Lady Bose, Dr. Jadunath Sarkar, Nivedita, Rabindranath, Swami Sadananda and others visited Bodh Gaya together and spent a few quiet and peaceful days. Some portion of Rabindranath’s Natir Puja bears the impress of this visit. Nivedita was also the poet’s guest at Silaidaha, occasionally. I quote here a remarkable passage from Rabindranath’s writings—

We envisage India as a person who when abroad will inspire respect by being respectable himself, who will add

honour to us by being himself honourable. He will tell others of the heritage that we have received—our grand inheritance. Then we will realise that we have also something to contribute. We have also reasons to be hopeful. Let us not merely take—let us also give—our thoughts, our ideas. That possibility is always there. Politics and commerce are not the end of all our endeavours. Our Rishis have given us better and more profound themes. If we tread an uncharted path which no dealer in stores or a teacher laden with books do not, we have nothing to be ashamed of. One has to pay a price if one wants a valuable thing. If we go abegging we get precious little. We lose our identity, ego and urge. But let us give them something—our own, our thoughts, our ways of life, let there be *quid pro quo*. Let us be on a reciprocal basis. At once the barometer of self-respect rises. We give with honour and receive with honour.

In a letter dated 16.4.1902 to Lady Abala Bose he acknowledged that it was Nivedita who introduced the poet to a Japanese friend (possibly Okakura Kakiyo).

Rabindranath in a lecture delivered at the Industrial Club Tokyo on May 15, 1929 referred to the fact that “one of the influences which acted towards the awakening of spirit in Bengal flowed from the heart of that great man Okakura.”

Nivedita was one of those stalwarts who had awakened the spirit of young Bengal by her fiery writings, evident sincerity and her great tapasya for the land of her Guru from which she had got more than inspiration to work for the freedom and salvation of India, both in theory and practice. She became more and more identified with the extremist school of thought. Her association with another greatman Sri Aurobindo, though on a political plane, had imparted a tone and colour to the then nationalist movement during the Swadeshi agitation and revolutionary days, and she identified herself with not only Anusilan Societies but also with underground movements. The poet in Rabindranath, though

patriotic and nationalist to the core shrank from anything which gave a semblance of violent reaction, though his role in the awakening of India was fundamental.

He was originally in the thick of the fight but gradually withdrew, just like Sri Aurobindo convinced of a deeper urge of creative activity in other fields and pastures new.

Literary critics have tried to trace a connection between Gora and Vivekananda-Nivedita. They have referred not only to the atmosphere of Gora, its subtle surcharged scenes of a society electric with thought and loaded to the brim with passion. We have to remember that Gora, though conceived earlier was not written till the heyday of the Swadeshi days. Actually Gora began its first appearance in the Prabasi in 1907 and it continued about $2\frac{1}{2}$ years. It was almost the time when Rabindranath was writing his famous patriotic songs, paying his homage to Sivaji or Sri Aurobindo and dilating on 'soul stirring powers such as' Let Bengal's earth and air and water be sanctified, O my God.

It has been stated that 'Gora' is more than a novel — it is the epic of India in transition at the most critically intellectual period of its history. It has also been stated that it portrays the picture of an aggressive Hinduism or resurgent nationalism and reminds one of Nivedita-Vivekananda. An illusion is also sought to be established that as Gora was the scion of an Irishman, there must have been in the poet an allergic subconscious element to remind him of Nivedita's lineage. Some go so far as to say that Gora portrays how a de-Hinduised Narendranath became a re-Hinduised Vivekananda and was turned into a cyclonic Hindu and became the loved of not only ladies of salons of Chicago, London and Paris but of masses as well. But they forget that the only God in whom Vivekananda believed was the sum total of all souls and above all he believed in his God the wicked, his God the Miserable, his God of all races. That was the Siva concept of Nivedita also. It is interesting to take note of Siva and Buddha concepts as

they had developed in Nivedita's consciousness and how the same two great and lofty symbols took shape in Rabindranath's writings more in an impersonal way.

The only direct evidence of Nivedita's influence on Rabindranath's concept of Gora is contained in his letter to Willie Pearson (quoted at p. 206 of his letters vo, VI)—“You asked me what connection had the writing of Gora with Sister Nivedita. She was our guest at Silaidaha and in trying to improvise a story according to her request I gave her something which came very near to the plot of Gora..... She was quite angry at the idea of Gora being rejected even by his disciple Sucharita owing to his foreign origin. You won't find it in Gora as it stands now but I introduced it in my story which I told her in order to drive the point deep into her mind”.

It is as if we are reading Vivekananda when Sucharita told Benoy that he was talking just like Gour Mohan, Benoy had said—

We want man Gods. Other countries may be satisfied with a Wellington, Newton or Rothscluid but we want a Brahmin and who is a Brahmin? It is he who can spurn temptation, who can triumph over sufferings, who notices not any want, whose heart is in communion with He, who is straight, who is calm, who is free. India wants that Brahmin. That Brahmin can make us free.

In the subconscious of Rabindranath, there was no doubt an image of not only of the hoary ages but also of the immediate past and its sponsors and the memory of Vivekananda might have unconsciously come into the poet's picture, and to this Nivedita must have contributed.

The poet in Gora wanted to ring out the old and ring in the new, ring out the false and ring in the true and the ageold symbol of Siva Tandava came to him. The Purusha must collaborate with Prakriti. Their union in comradeship was not an act but a quality. To quote Nivedita's words,

No, it was not to be worship through song, it was to be through blood and tear, toil and sweat. This was to be a manifestation, a presentation, just like Shyama's dance-let Kali the Mother come—vibrant Sonant, roaring like a million lunatics, dancing mad with joy. That prelude was necessary for a greater dawn, for a glorious future.

True Rabindranath comes out however at the end. Gora was also seeking for that 'Bharat-Barsha' which was to be full in riches, in learning, in religion. He envisaged an integral and universal symbol and image of India. Vivekananda's concept of India was no doubt of the same strain generally but the difference was in dimension—I am an Indian—every Indian is my brother—He is my life. India's gods and goddesses are my Gods and Goddesses. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred Heaven and Varanasi of my old age.

Swamiji clothed it in a definitely religious frametiage "We believe in one God, the Father of us all who is omnipresene and omniscient and who.....preserves his children with infinite love. We believe in a personal God as the Christian do (Rabindranath might not) that his personality is manifested in us, that God is in us, and that we are in God (Rabindranath also believes in the famous text of the upainshads that Brahma pervades everything.) Rabindranath's was the poet's religion. He echoed the Upanishadic saying—'I think not that I know him well, or that I know him or even that him not. Gora's last realization was—

Give me the mantra of that God,
who is the God of Hindus, the Muslims, the
Christians, the Brahmas, of all whose temple
is not out of bounds to any—who is the
God not of Hindus but of India.

Of course to an artist of Rabindranath's calibre and literary fineness, mere copying of a living person as the character of a

book is an anathema. Gora is a syncretic creation. In Rabindranath we find a synoptic appreciation of many influences, many trends—Upanisadic monism, Vaishnavic dualism, a Pagan abandon, scientific rationalism of the western influence of utilitarianism. Moreover however much Vivekananda and Rabindranath come nearer to each other both were giants in their own way. Rabindranath's best tributes to Swami Vivekananda came later. In 1315 Bhadra in East and West he wrote that the creation of Mahabharat is our sacred task and India's greatest men like Rammohan, Vivekananda and Ranade had begun it. We have to complete it. He referred to Swamiji as the Mahatma who recently had died.

There is one thing which is again to be high-lighted. People often talk of Rabindranath's religious belief, his Adi Samajist creed but they forget that a poet's religion is an universal one and there have been climatic changes in interpretation and presents. I would not use the conventional word religion. I would rather coin a phrase, his cosmic sense and sensibility which rose over pride and prejudice. This "unattachment" was sometimes so characteristic of him. It is interesting to note that since 1898 Rabindranath was gradually stating publicly that he belonged to the bigger Hindu fold. In 1902/03/04 it became more prominent. His religion of Man, the divinity of humanity, humanity of divinity was in seed as the evolution of his interpretation of the Upanishadic thought. He had been born and brought up in that famous verse of Isha Upanashad, his father's sheet anchor. It was taking a new shape in his mind and new orientation. In 1904 he was saying publicly—If we dub ourselves exclusively as Brahmo's and exclude ourselves from the mass of the Hindu Samaj, we exclude Him who is Brahma in his name. This became prominent in "Gora." When Paresh babu asked Benoy why should we only look back to the past, Rabindranath through Benoy answered what was typically Nivedita's saying—No truth can belong to the past if it is truth. Truth is living. Truth is purifying. It is in the bones of India.

Do you think no such man ever was born in India (p. 220 sixth Volume). We do not know whether in this book conceived partly on Nivedita's request, there was the idea of Nivedita's ideal man i.e. Swamiji. Of course the poet was always for gentle persuasion rather than aggressiveness which Gora typified and which the poet did not specifically approve. Gora was only repeating Rabindranath's version—Don't you belong to a group by being a Hindu. Gora's answer was—I am a Hindu—Hindu is no group. It is a nation and that nation is so big, so great that I do not know how can I define within what limits its national consciousness should prevail. After all a sea is not merely a conglomeration of its waves. Hindu is not a group.

Sucharita had asked—Then if it is not a class or a group why does it fight as a group. Gora's answer was typical—Because it is a living organism. It has a life. Why does a man react when he is threatened with personal violence. A stone does not. We have in our comments used the words aggressive Hinduism in relation to Gora. The words are not mine, nor of Rabindranath but of Sister Nivepita in relation to Swamiji. Vivekananda was one of the first authoritative exponents, to Western nations of the ideas of the Vedas and Upanishad and Nivedita in the Master as I saw Him (p. 239) refer to his Swamiji's saying that he wanted "to make Hinduism aggressive" i. e. the eternal faith must become active and proselytising, capable of sending out special missions, of making converts, of taking back into the fold those of her own children who had been taken away from her, and of the conscious and deliberate assimilation of new elements. Did Gora represent this aspect of Vivekananda's work as Nivedita paints it—"I go forth to preach a religion of which Buddhism is nothing but a rebel child and Christianity with all her pretensions, a distant echo." Nivedita correctly commented "Truth being thus the one goal of the Hindu creeds, and this being conceived of, not as revealed truth to be accepted, but as accessible truth to be experienced, it followed that there could

not be any antagonism,—real or imagined, between scientific and religious conviction, in Hinduism. In this fact, the Swami saw the immense capacity of the Indian peoples for that organised conception of science peculiar to the modern era. No advance of knowledge had ever been resisted by the religious intellet of India. “All men hedge in the fields of earth, but who can hedge in the sky ?” Wrote Nivedita about what Vivekananda had said. Such thoughts would appeal to Rabindranath, also. Again whatever be the personal views of Rabindranath about idolatory and Murti Pujah he speaks through Gora as substantially accepting Vivekananda—Nivedita view. —why should, I without any rhyme or reason have prejudice against form. Manifestation in form is the fundamental law of expression. The unlimited is trying to express himself, fructify and fulfil himself in limitation. That which cannot be expressed is not complete.

I quote again from Gora—

The whole nation seems to have sold his head to untruth. It is in a sense echoing Vivekananda’s Manmadura address—Our religion is in the kitchen, our god in the cooking pot, our religion—don’t touch me.

Again Vivekananda’s Sudra cult and Rabindranath’s diatribes against untouchability touch a similar plane of thought though independently of each other. Even in his later years we read of ‘Kaler Jatra’ and ‘Rather Rashi’ and are reminded of Vivekananda and Nivedita. We might incidentally note that Ganesh Deuskar Editor of Hitabadi used to declaim both against Rabindranath and Vivekananda so far as their Bengali style was concerned. The simple literary style in—of Vivekananda in “East and West” was appreciated by Rabindranath. This is described by Sri Kumud Bandhu Sen in the Udbodhan, Golden Jubilee number. “A little after the publication of “Bangadarsana” in new second series (edited by Rabindranath Tagore), the late Rai Bahadur Dinesh Ch. Sen came one evening at 8 O’ clock to the writer and asked for the book.

The writer asked "why", when I repeatedly entreated you to read this book and pointed out how in a forceful and living language Swami has given a new structure where with to build Bengali literature, you did not care. Why this sudden demand? Sen answered "I am just coming from Rabi Babu. He said "you go at once and read this book of Vivekananda—you won't find elsewhere such ideas, such language, such penetrating liberal vision and the idea of synthesis between the East and the West. Here Rabindranath and Swamiji were talking almost in the same strain. The East and the West—the twain—have to meet. We give with honour and take with honour. Like Vivekananda the poet at one time had hit hard the American public.

Seattle Post Intelligence 26th September, 1916 wrote—Those who dwell in the belief that the Hindu thinker is a suppressed soul who is content to voice the misty dreams will be well disillusioned if they hear this vigorous logician, seer and prophet. Even earlier than that in June 1913 before his nobel laureateship he spoke on race conflict in Rochester New Hampton. In 1916 in Detroit during the war hysteria he thundered against treatment of the Asiatics and the blacks—a dark spot of American national life.

In this respect Rabindranath's American visits follow closely that of Swami Vivekananda who totally unknown, unequipped, without funds, with no credentials, found in the train from Chicago to Boston an old lady who invited him to live at Breezy Meadows in Massachuset and introduced him to Prof. John Henry Wright of Harvad University. He was responsible for sponsoring Vivekananda to the Parliament of Religions. Marie Louis Barke's interesting new discoveries throw a new light on Swamiji's life. Again we find Rabindranath telling us in Hibbert Lectures Oxford in 1930 as follows—

The solitary enjoyment of the Infinite in meditation no longer satisfied me and the texts which I used for my silent worship, lost their inspiration without my knowing it. This concept of



divinity of humanity and humanity of divinity, based on the original doctrine of the Upanishads seems almost to be repetition of Vivekananda's words with the difference that if we conceive Jiva as Siva or of the divinity of humanity, the corollary of humanity of divinity is not so much prominent, though inherent, in a vedantist exposition. There the poet scores, as a Lilabadi. There is a double ladder of consciousness, ascent and descent.

S. K. Ratcliffe in the preface of "Religion and Dharma" of Sister Nivedita wrote in 1915 — None saw more clearly than Sister Nivedita from the beginning the possibilities and the perils of Indian nationalism as then understood and preached. There were many *both Indian and European* to insist upon the difficulties or the futility of the nationalist conception and aim.....Sister had no doubt as to the capacity of the Indian Mind and character to emerge.....to her the striking characteristic of the transition was the speed with which, in the nineteenth century, the ancient social order of India had adjusted itself to the demands of a modern alien civilization — Religion is not confined to Sadhana, Tapasya is not a matter of Thakurgar. Humanity is *one* and each part of it is necessary to all. She used to say—

"Great literatures have to be created in each of the vernaculars. These literatures must voice the past, translate the present, forecast the future. The science and imagination of Europe have to be brought through the vernacular, to every door. India cannot afford to imitate foreign institutions. Neither can she afford to remain ignorant of foreign ideals. The history of the past has to be rewritten in simple terms"

The ideal therefore was to be—

"The adoption of the active or aggressive attitude of mind, changes for us all our theories...We seek great objects and create them, scorning small hopes. The India about us has become Mahabharata".....We look to make our descendents greater than our ancestors.....Karma is no longer a destiny but an

opportunity.....Buddha did not sacrifice Yasadhara when he left her. He conferred on her the glory of renouncing with him. Marriage itself ought to be in the first place a friendship of the mind. Love is not only a feeling of the heart, it is a force, like the force of the gravitational pull in the Universe. The strength of love that is in the nature of Vishnu and which nourishes the Universe is the same strength that is in Lakshmi his beloved. The beauty of Lakshmi is the symbol of fullness. You cannot see beauty in creation so long as there is conflict. Where there is harmony, there is the manifestation of beauty.*

* Originally part of the lectures delivered at Calcutta University as Nivedita Lecturer and now produced with additions and alterations from Nivedita Comemoration volume published by Vivekananda Janmotsava Samity, 1968. The English renderings of the poet's verses are the writer's own.

APPENDIX II

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Orator, Writer and Art Critic

“Never forget the glory of Human Nature ! We are the Greatest God. ... Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the Boundless Ocean which I Am ...” Thus spake Vivekananda in America in 1895 which Romain Rolland, himself an enchanted soul of fine artistic intuition and sensibility, quoted with approbation as a representative thought of Master whom he was describing in his remarkable book.¹ This great creed of Man the God was latent in the Indian atmosphere from the Upanishadic days, but it got a new orientation, a new spiritual valuation and a novel enrichment from Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Nineteenth century in India was an age when there was a tremendous impact from the West in the thought world. The glamour of its material civilization, its rich literature, its concept of social and political ethics, its utilitarian creed and scientific deeds were not lost on the intellectuals.

Even the masses were waking up. The railway train, the electric telegraph and other scientific discoveries were creating havoc in the proletarian mind as much as Mill, Bentham, Ruskin, Rousseau, Tom Payne or Patrick Henry did to the educated. New wine was being poured into old bottles and the stirring within was translated and transmitted mainly through a progressive outlook towards a creative idealism. Originally there was an attempt, conscious and unconscious, to divorce it from the basic trends of old achievements and our heritage of the past. This acceptance of the new with the old was the great contribution which Bengal made to India, and to the world. We need not debate what exactly was the nature, import and impact of this nascence or renaissance. The role of Vivekananda in this galaxy of gallants is so impressive and

important that he stands out as one of the beacon lights of the 'torch race of Indian renaissance'. In him not only the East and the West met but there was a constant and conscious attempt to find a bridge between materialistic development and spiritual needs, between a technological order and an aesthetic gain, between a medieval ethos and modern day values, based however on a spiritualised humanism. In evolving this new concept, his somewhat sceptic and discerning soul had the great benefit of a touch with a universal soul like Shri Ramakrishna's whom Rolland conceived as a meeting point, a rapport of all essences—divine and human. His life was therefore not merely the story of a conscience, of a person who from a doubting Thomas became an ardent believer, but it was also the story of the vision of a splendid harmony where the past, the present and the future world mingled and blended in a grand aspiration of all races, all creeds and all ages. It was to be a reconciliation not only between India and America, between the East and the West, between men and women, but also between faith and reason, between conflicting passions and ideologies.

When we estimate Vivekananda as an orator, the first thing that would strike any audience would be the personality of the man, 'the look that Raphael has painted for us on the brow of the sistine child' as Nivedita puts it, and the evident sincerity of the speaker, apart from the richness and beauty of his thought and his fiery eloquence. All these combined would give an effect which would be electric. "Where others would talk of ways and means, he knew how to light a fire. Where others gave directions, he would show the thing itself".²

Some of us have vague ideas that Swamiji's fame as an orator was first recognised when he burst into the American scene in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in September, 1893. Many records are there, critical as well as otherwise, including not only newspaper reports but reminiscences of his admirers and disciples such as Sister Christine, Marie Louise Burke's *New Discoveries* add many hitherto unknown tit bits

into the general panorama. The fact is that he was a born orator, he knew what he was saying and that in a masterly way. From the sun-swept shores of Kanya Kumarika to the snow-capped Himalayas, he had moved and prayed and preached the one cardinal fact of Indian culture—“We have to reach religion”. There are other and higher lessons that India can teach, but they are only for the learned. The lessons of mildness, gentleness, sympathy and brotherhood, everyone may learn, whether man, woman or child, learned or unlearned, without respect of race, caste or creed”.³ The very manner of putting it was the characteristic trait of Vivekananda. Of course his entry into the American scene through the Parliament of Religions gave it a world significance. Even in America, before the meeting of the Parliament, he had created an impression in the circle he moved about and Marie Louise Burke quotes a letter of Mrs. Wright, wife of Prof. John Henry Wright of Annisquam, Mass, dated August 29, 1893, to her mother.⁴ Apart from the fact that he had a wonderful command of the English language, and his voice was musical and his logic penetrating, his saffron robes created a devastating effect. According to Mrs. Wright “he was a most gorgeous vision”. The other basic point was that he was the one speaker who did not consciously or unconsciously magnify his own religion and the spiritual ideas they contained and also talked of the shortcomings in their practical application. He had a great respect for other peoples’ religions too. These aspects gave a punch to his talk and added a sincerity which could appeal straight to the heart as from a man to man, apart from its philosophic content or theological jargon. We know of the tremendous impact that Vivekananda created when he addressed the audience in the Parliament of Religions as “Sisters and Brothers of America”. We are told that when Vivekananda spoke thus, there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes. He was an orator by divine right.⁵ Among the many tributes paid to Swami Vivekananda on this

occasion, one that deserves quoting and has been quoted more than once is that by the famous poetess Harriet Monroe, Editor of *Poetry*. She records in her autobiography: "But the handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant magnetic; his voice, rich as a bronze-bell; the controlled fervour of his feelings; the beauty of his message to the Western World he was facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch".⁶ Even if there is an over-statement in it, this sums up Vivekananda the orator. The effect on the common men and women of America is melodramatically described in a poem entitled *Aunt Hannah on the Parliament of Religions*.

I quote it as it is reproduced :—

Then I heered th' han'some Hindu Monk, drest up in
orange dress,
Who sed that all humanity was part of God—no less,
An' he said we was *not* sinners, so I comfort took, once
more,
While the Parl'ment of Religion roared with approving roar.⁷

Bepin Chandra Pal's testimony is quoted in the *Life of Swamiji* by his Eastern and Western disciples to point out the total effect of Vivekananda's work in England and his lectures there.

It runs as follows :

"Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have difference of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their



hearts. Owing to his teaching most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he has succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from *The Dead Pulpit* by Mr. Howeis, you have clearly understood that, owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity".⁸ One great illustration of his eloquence is quoted in Vol. II of the *Life*. It referred to Calcutta's welcome at the Sovabazar Rajbati. The address was presented in a silver casket to the Swamiji who replied in a speech "that has become famous as a masterpiece of oratory and of fervent patriotism. This brought his recognition in an especial sense, as the Prophet of Modern India. He had defined in a new from the whole scope of Indian consciousness and had given birth to entirely new ideas of national and public life. The spirit of this lecture and of the Swamiji himself, made the profoundest impression, which has widened and deepened with the years, producing a New Order in modern India".⁹

He also excelled in small group meetings or parlour parleys. Sister Nivedita gives a pen picture of one such meeting in London in a West End drawing room, and Sister Christine describes another at the Thousand Island Park.

His second visit to America has been fully described in the life story which his disciples had written and we realise again and again the tremendous effect of his lectures and sermons, not only their grand variety but their deep penetration and pervasive influence. The magazine *Unity* is quoted describing his work in Los Angeles and it speaks as follows : "There is combined in the Swami Vivekananda, the learning of a University President, the dignity of an Archbishop, with the grace and winsomeness of a free and natural child. Getting upon the platform without a moment's preparation he would soon be in the midst of his subject, sometimes becoming almost

tragic as his mind would wander from deep metaphysics to the prevailing conditions in Christian countries of today, whose people go and seek to reform the Filipinos with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other"...¹⁰

The *Washington Post* of Oct. 29, 1894 (quoted by Marie Louise Burke) wrote these significant lines :—"A Hindoo who is a member of no religious sect, who claims no knowledge of powers of occultism, who is not a believer in the miracles of yogis, who never saw the Dalai Lama and who does not think any more of him or of the other wonder-workers of India than he does of the other Christian Missionaries who are working on the outskirts of masses there, but who simply announces himself as a religious student and a teacher to world at large is something of a rarity".¹¹ His Cambridge classes, his lectures at Brooklyn Ethical and other associations, his replies to Ramabai circles were actuated by two objectives, first, to find a practical answer to the many problems : secondly, to preach a gospel of help, a gospel of social raising up and of gospel of equality. To him religion was life and not mere thought. It had to be lived. Heaven was nearer through football. Prof. Ernest P. Harrowitz sums it up :

I have no temple and no creed
I celebrate no mystic rite
The human heart is all I need for
I have found God ever there.
Love is the one sufficient creed and
Comradeship is purest prayer.¹²

In order to appreciate Swami Vivekananda as a writer, it has to be understood that his published writings and speeches cover more than four thousand pages and deal with subjects as varied and vast as they could be,—from Vedantia heights to a nationalistic creed, from *Raja Yoga* to cradle tales. They are mainly in English but there are some in Bengali and a few in Sanskrit also. Moreover besides his original Bengali writings,

noted for their vigour, sincerity and literary skill, most of his English writings have been translated without the loss of the essential fire and faith of the originals. They may be subdivided into—

(a) Lectures ; (b) Discourses and Interviews ; (c) Questions and answers ; (d) Inspired talks and conversations ; (e) Miscellaneous writings and articles, including mythological stories and biographies ; (f) Letters and (g) Poems.

It is said that there are certain difficulties to study Vivekananda from a purely artistic or literary point of view. Most of his prose writings are with a purpose and they are mainly vehicles for the propaganda of his great mission in life. Any estimate of Vivekananda as a litterateur will be incomplete if we do not draw attention to the fact that in addition to being a lecturer and an essayist on highly philosophical and moral topics he was also a story-teller, a parable-writer and a poet of no mean order. They opened up vistas of literary promise, which, if persisted, might have given the world a literary giant. Vivekananda's writings get permanent literary value because of their intrinsic quality, lucidity of thought, nobility of diction and for the inspiration they give and the aspiration they create.

The ultimate value of a literature is not to be measured merely by what a poet or a novelist says or portrays or by the imageries he weaves but by what he helps others to become, not only in the moral or idealistic sense as a preacher or teacher but by creation of symbols. 'All true literature is symbolic', says Abercrombie. This is particularly true of Vivekananda's poems. As has been said, poetry, even when it is dominated by intellectual tendency and motive, cannot really live and work by intellect alone ; it is not created nor wholly shaped by reason or judgment, but is an intuitive seeing and inspired hearing.

Formative influences on Vivekananda as a writer may be summed up as :

- (1) His vast erudition in English and Sanskrit literature in an age of cultural impact from the West when new wine was being poured into old bottles and old moorings were in danger of being snapped.
- (2) His emotional abandon tempered by a great faith and a dedication to the higher values of life without being cribbed, cabined and confined by narrow limits of caste, creed, colour or convention.
- (3) His intensive sense of a burning nationalism which made him say "The soil of India is my highest heaven".

The *Karma-Yoga*, *Raja-Yoga*, *Jnana-Yoga* and *Bhakti-Yoga* may be termed as Swamiji's four outstanding contributions to philosophical literature along with the Harvard address on *Vedanta Philosophy*.¹³ They show such a depth of understanding and mode of presentation in simple understandable language that they rank as classics and would have brought him name and fame in this line alone. The themes such as the *Sages of India*, *Christ the Messenger*, the stories of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, of Sita and Savitri, of the boy Gopala, of his great *Guru*, of Pavhari Baba or of Vilvamangal were told with a clarity that was appealing. I quote below a simple parable with his pungent dig at evolutionists and bacteriologists.

"A frog lived in a well. It had lived there for a long time. It was born there and brought up there, and yet was a little, small frog. Of course the evolutionists were not there then to tell us whether the frog lost its eyes or not, but for our story's sake, we must take it for granted that it had its eyes, and that it every day cleansed the water of all the worms and bacilli that lived in it with an energy that would do credit to our modern bacteriologists. In this way it went on and became a little sleek and fat. Well, one day another frog that lived in the sea came and fell into the well.

“Where are you from ?”

“I am from the sea”.

“The Sea ! How big is that ? Is it as big as my well ?”
and he took a leap from one side of the well to the other.

“My friend,” said the frog of the sea, “how do you compare the sea with your little well ?”

Then the frog took another leap and asked, “Is your sea so big ?”

“What nonsense you speak, to compare the sea with your well” !

“Well, then”, said the frog of the well, “nothing can be bigger than my well ; there can be nothing bigger than this ; this fellow is a liar, so turn him out”.¹⁴

Vivekananda’s letters are also worth quoting as specimens of literary excellence and constitute by themselves not only a chapter of his unconscious literary bias but as great human documents of permanent value. I need only refer to a few ; one has only to read his letters, say, to Hale Sisters or to Miss Mcleod. I quote one which in pathos, sincerity, depth and love, is one of the best specimens : “I have bundled my things and am waiting for the deliverer. Shiva, Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore”.....“After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature ; works, activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice ; the same old voice thrilling my soul.....Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst of power. Now they are vanishing and I drift—I come Mother.....a spectator, no more an actor”.¹⁵ In a letter to Swami Brahmananda in 1894 he wrote : “Neither money pays nor name nor fame, nor learning, it is character that can cleave through adamant walls of difficulties”.¹⁶ He was a great letter-writer. His epistles are specimens of a giant force latent in sparkling words and act

like electric shocks. A short letter from Ridgeley in 1899 is a shining example :

“Life is a series of fights and disillusionments.....The secret of life is not enjoyment but education through experience”.

Again his sayings and utterances are mines of literary gems, apart from their depth of philosophic content. A few examples may be given :

“Give up the burden of all deeds to the Lord. Give all, both good and bad. Do not keep the good and give only the bad. God helps those who do *not* help themselves”.¹⁷—“the first angle of the triangle of love is that love knows no bargaining—the Love, the Lover and the beloved are one”¹⁸...“Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within...This is the whole of religion. Doctrines and dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details”...¹⁹

The Problem of Modern India and its Solution—the first Bengali article written by Swami Vivekananda as an introduction to the *Udbodhana* 1899,—*Ramakrishna, His life and sayings, The Paris Congress of the History of Religions, Knowledge—its Source and Acquaintance, Modern India, Our Present Social Problem, The Education that India Needs* are a few among many of his prose writings which have a literary flair and are models of literary essays which have a permanent value.

His original writings in Bengali deserve particular mention. These are *Parivrajaka** (Wanderer), *Prachya O Paschatya* (The East and The West), *Bhabbar Katha** (Thoughts for the Moment), *Patravali* (Letters), *Veera Vani* (Heroic sayings) etc.

He knew that no artificial language could ever have that force, that brevity, that expressiveness or admit of being given any turn you please, as the spoken language. “Language must

* In the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, *Parivrajaka* and *Bhabbar Katha* have been rendered into English under the titles of *Memoirs of European Travel* and *Matter for Serious Thought* respectively. (Vide C. W., Vol. VII, p. 297 and Vol. VI, p. 193.)

be made like pure steel—turn and twist it any way you like, it is again the same—it cleaves a rock in twain at one stroke, without its edge being turned”.²⁰ On language his ideal was unequivocal—

“Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master’s language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed”.²¹

“The Bengali language must be modelled not after the Sanskrit but rather after the Pali, which has a strong resemblance to it. In coining or translating technical terms in Bengali, one must however use all Sanskrit words for them, and an attempt should be made to coin new words. For this purpose if a collection is made from a Sanskrit dictionary of all these technical terms, then it will help greatly the constitution of the Bengali language”.²² In short Vivekananda pleaded that the style of writing should be of the kind in which people speak and think. His *Bangabhasa* (Bengali language) was therefore colloquial. The book *Prachya O Paschatya* was a unique book which Rabindranath praised to Dinesh Sen unhesitatingly. This is mentioned by S. Kumud Bandhu Sen in the *Udbodhan* (Golden Jubilee Number). The poet asked him to read this book and find out how colloquial Bengali could appear as a living and forceful language.

The prose works of Swami Vivekananda are mainly dissertations, essays and lectures and replies to addresses. Among his original Bengali writings, the most remarkable are the *Parivrajaka* and *Prachya O Paschatya*, mentioned above. The beautiful language of his prose writings, both in English and Bengali, the deep pathos they invoke and the grand atmosphere they create really confer on them a literary excellence which is generally absent in such types of literature. The stories of Jada Bharata, of Prahlada, of Lord Buddha and of Christ, particularly his talk on *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A’ Kempis and his delineation of the epics of ancient India have permanent literary value also. How beautifully he describes the

life of Pavhari Baba, or Vyasa's story of Savitri ! In telling us of Christ the Messenger, he ends with the prophetic words : "Our salutations go to all the past Prophets, whose teachings and lives we have inherited, whatever might have been their race, clime or creed. Our salutations go to all those God-like men and women, who are working to help humanity, whatever be their birth, colour or race. Our salutations to those who are coming in the future,—living Gods—to work unselfishly for our descendants".²³

Now let us take Vivekananda the poet. His well-known poems in English are—*Kali the Mother*, *Six Stanzas of Nirvanashatkam*, *Hold on yet a While*, *Brave Heart*, *The Song of the Sannyasin—Om Tat Sat Om* and *Peace* or *To the Awakened India*.

There are also English translations of his Bengali poems such as (a) *The Hymn of Creation*, (b) *The Hymn of Samadhi*, (c) *A Hymn to the Divine Mother*, (d) *A Hymn to Shiva*, (e) *A Hymn to the Divinity of Sree Ramakrishna*, (f) *And Let Shyama Dance There* and (g) *A Song I Sing to Thee*.

One of his very first poems in English is the one which he "inflicted", to quote his own words, on Prof. Wright even before the Parliament meeting at Chicago in 1893. It is not the best from the literary standpoint, but it contains some beautiful lines, e.g.

The moon's soft light, the stars so bright
The glorious orb of day
He shines in them His beauty might
Reflected lights are they
The majestic morn, the melting eve
The boundless billowy sea
In nature's beauty, songs of birds
I see through them it is He.

Again take the one entitled *Peace* composed at Ridgeley Manor, New York, 1899, when he says

It is sweet rest in music ;
And pause in sacred art ;
The silence between speaking ;
Between two fits of passion—
It is the calm of heart.

The concept of peace as 'death between two lives' or as 'lull between two storms' raises a poetic imagery of a highly controversial philosophical content. Vivekananda's *Kali the Mother* vividly portrays the spirit of destruction as typified by the ancient concept of She, the Terrible, and to the poet who has realised this aspect of cosmic life, the following crisp and superb passage is a spontaneous expression—

For Terror is Thy name
Death is in the Thy breath
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e'er.
Thou 'Time', the All-Destroyer !
Come, O Mother, come !

Here is a complete picture of negation and the background is not only poetic but the prelude has been correctly painted :

The stars are blotted out,
The clouds are covering clouds,
It is darkness vibrant, sonant.

A million lunatics are let loose, mountain waves dash, the sky is pitchy dark. Sister Nivedita gives us a graphic picture of how he wrote this poem in a fever of inspiration. He had actually fallen on the floor when he had finished, exhausted with his own intensity. "The worship of the Terrible now became his whole cry".

Here it would be permissible to digress into a short discussion of what is the essence of poetry. It is not, as Sri



Aurobindo correctly points out, an aesthetic pleasure of the imagination, the intellect and the ear, a sort of elevated pastime. It is not also a matter of faultlessly correct or at most an exquisite technique. True poetry is self-vision or word-vision—it is the spiritual excitement of rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in the inner and outer worlds—

Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides—

as Wordsworth has it, or it is, in the words of Meredith,—

Seraphically free
From taint of personality.

Like the Vedic Agni, the poet is the youth, the Seer, the beloved and the immortal Guest with his honeyed tongue of ecstasy. He is Truth-Conscious, the Truth-Finder, and his poetry is born as a flame from earth, yet it is the heavenly messenger from the Immortals.

It would perhaps not be correct to say that “the religious poems of Swami Vivekananda and his defence in plea of a mystic mediaeval philosophy are the swan-songs of a dying culture vis-a-vis the resurgent modernized India”.

It has also been commented that Swamiji's great poems *The Song of the Sannyasin* and *The Songs of the Free*, though excellent poetry by themselves, do not carry with them a universal appeal and their ideational (the term is borrowed from Sorokin) stimuli are mediaeval in tone, taste and tune. The criticism is that today the saving grace and the holy communion are not in *Om Tat-Sat Om* but in a balanced life of dedicated work. It is forgotten that here the poet brings out no cult of personal salvation but speaks of the Divine in Man at its best.

Romain Rolland has devoted a considerable part of his discussion as to how far the American spirit was impregnated by Indian thought before Vivekananda and how far, in his

turn, Vivekananda did imbibe any of this reorientation from Emerson, Thoreau, William James, Walt Whitman, Maxmuller, Paul Deussen and others. It was true that in the West he discovered a nation of heroes, the true Kshatriyas, but the western sojourn did not have much influence on his literary ideals and expression either in style or in thought. Of course he was dreaming of meeting of India and Europe (including America) and a rejuvenated spiritualised humanity. It was not medieval in character. The dynamism in his writings is not make-believe rationalism. Take even the theme in his poem written to the Rajah of Khetri in the style of the poet Longfellow—*Hold on Yet a While*—which reminds us of a working creed—

‘Not a work will be lost, no struggle vain,
Though hopes be blighted, powers gone ;’

This leads to the epilogue—

‘Awake, arise, and dream no more !’

and its fitting caption was *The Worship of Man the God*.*

‘Him worship, the only visible,
Break all other idols.’

That was the Living God.

The symbol of *Daridra Narayan*, of the divinity of humanity and of humanity of divinity,—words which Tagore later used in his Hibbert Lectures in Oxford on the *Religion of Man*—thus came to be evolved. But there was a difference. Tagore’s imagery conceived of *Visva Manava* or the Universal Man, and not merely Man the poor, Man the afflicted, Man the Have-not. He, however, sufficiently echoed Vivekananda in saying : “The solitary enjoyment of the Infinite in meditation no longer satisfied me and the texts which I used for my silent worship lost their inspiration without my knowing it. I am sure I vaguely felt that my need was spiritual self-realization

*The two lines that follow are from Swamiji’s poem *The Living God*. (C. W., Vol. VIII, p. 169.)

in the life of Man through some disinterested services''.²⁴ Rabindranath was also fond of *Siva* symbol and though he had dilated on the fatherhood of God his poetic genius had been attracted by symbol of the 'motherhood' of woman. We do not get in Vivekananda any 'love' poem as we get in Rabindranath or in the Vaisnava poets or even in Sri Aurobindo whose beautiful delineation of the theme in Radha's prayer or Savitri or Ahana is superb. We remember that Swamiji told the Rama Bai circle in Brooklyn that the ideal woman was the wife in the West and the mother in the Orient. We have also to remember that vision is the characteristic power of the poet. A poet sees. He is a seer. A philosopher's essential gift is discriminative thought whereas a scientist has to depend on analytical observation.

We can unhesitatingly say that here is not only a great spiritual savant but also a good litterateur, who absorbs history, poetry, legend and tradition and weaves them in a composite whole. There is, however, one note of caution. Whatever one speaks or writes with a purpose is in a sense propagandist in character, and it is stated that true literature rarely flourishes unless there is spontaneity in it. We have in some of the poems and prose writings of Vivekananda that rare quality.

In Vol. IV of the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda published by the Advaita Ashram (1932 Edition) we come upon some translations of his Bengali and Sanskrit writings ; the one on *Modern India*, a Bengali contribution to the *Udbodhana*, which ends with an invocation—'Make me a man'—is a remarkable exposition not merely for its outspoken strength, its evident sincerity, its patriotic tone, but also for its advanced socialistic views with a proletarian bias. The prophetic words were—'forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are your flesh and blood your brothers.' The letter to Sarala Devi dated 24th April, 1897, on the education that India needs contains Swamiji's

testament of faith and his Bengali poem, *Sakhar Prati (To a Friend)* sums up the position—

‘Listen, friend, I will speak my heart to thee
I have found in my life this truth supreme.
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,
There’s one ferry that takes across the sea.
Formulas of worship, control of breath,
Science, philosophy, systems varied,
Relinquishment, possession and the like,
All these are but delusions of the mind—

Love, love—that’s the one thing, the sole treasure’.

A Hymn to the Divine Mother and *A Hymn to Siva* are typical literary invocations of the Swamiji in Sanskrit. His powerful poem *And Let Shyama Dance There*, which is an English rendering of his Bengali poem *Nachuk Tahate Shyama*, gives a somewhat unique pen-picture of sweet and grim aspects of Nature alternated with telling effect which shows a literary artist’s imageries at their best. The silver moon, a shower of sweet smile, murmuring rivers, rippling lakes, the maddening wine of love, the charm of sex, on the one hand, and on the other,

The roll of thunder, the crashing of clouds,
War of elements spreading earth and sky,
Darkness vomiting forth blinding darkness

give us a poet who is not a mere weaver of words but a genius who had realised the inner meaning of the cosmic dance of Nature in her most primeval and pristine glory,—a description almost akin in depth and poetic pathos to Sri Aurobinda’s *Savitri*.

Vivekananda was not only an art critic but also an artist. He was a painter and a musician too. He was a singer of songs and people say he had a flair for playing indigenous drums. As a matter of fact his melodious songs, particularly his devotional ones, so profoundly affected Sri Ramakrishna that he used to fall in a trance. It may almost be said without contradiction

that the outer symphony of music became a fruitful source of contact between the Master and the disciple leading to an inner harmony. Ramprasad's songs were his favourites and he would sing Sankaracharya's hymns with an emotional abandon that would enthral an audience.

That great book of reminiscences by Sri M. records many instances of Narendra singing at the Master's behest such songs as—

“Oh Mother make me mad”

“Mother mine,

or

In the depth of darkness, flashes your formless form”.

By the eighties of the last century Rabindranath Tagore had established his reputation as a rising poet, singer and composer of songs. His devotional songs had particularly gained fame even in that early age. It would not be wrong to assume that they were known to Vivekananda who was a genuine lover of music. We can visualise the young poet's soul stirring songs being sung with a gusto by the still younger prophet to be. More than one instance is recorded²⁵. We can almost picture the whole scene in the its basic grandeur and sublime surrender Narendra singing in his beautiful voice

“I have made Thee, O Lord, my life's loadstar”

and the Master slowly sinking in to the infinite depth of the inner consciousness.

In Lahore he met Swami Ramtirtha. We are told by his disciples that at the dinner in his honour he sang *Jahan Ram Wuhan Kam nahin Jahan Kam nahin Ram*—where God is, there is work—where there is no work—there is no God. His melodious voice made the meaning of his song thrill the hearts of those present. Vivekananda's own view was that Indian music was developed to the full seven notes, even to half and quarter notes, ages ago. India led in music, also, in drama and sculpture²⁶.

Again he said : "There is science in Dhrupad, Kheyal etc., but it is *Kirtana* i.e. in *Mathura* and *Viraha* and other like compositions that there is real music for there is feeling. Feeling is the soul, the secret of everything. There is more music in common people's songs.....The science of *Dhrupada* etc. applied to the music of *Kirtana* will produce the perfect music".²⁷ As O'Shaughnessy says, "We are the music-makers, and we are the dreamers of dream".^{27a}

Sj. Bhupendranath Dutta's book on his patriot-prophet brother has a chapter on Vivekananda as an art critic.²⁸ We learn therefrom as well as from other evidences that he used to draw pictures in his boyhood with water-colours. He would paint, he would sing, and he had a knack also for acting. We read in his biography that in Poona he actually criticised Ravivarma's style of painting, at a time when the painter's fame was at its highest, for introducing a new technique.

Music, art and language were to him so many vehicles for reinterpreting Nature in its true spirit and not merely describing it in its outward expression or form. In between his other engagements he would find time to talk on secular subjects as Art and we find him talking at a farewell reception in the hall of the "Royal Society of Painters in Water-colours". At Wendte Hall, San Francisco, his topic of discussion was *Arts and Sciences in India* and he explained the musical notations. Sister Nivedita who did so much for Indian Art was inspired by him. Swamiji's views on Art are very succinctly recorded as follows :²⁹

"The secret of Greek Art is its imitation of nature even to the minutest details ; whereas the secret of the Indian Art is to represent the ideal. The energy of the Greek painter is spent in perhaps painting a piece of flesh and he is so successful that a dog is deluded into taking it to be a real bit of meat and so goes to bite it. Now, what glory is there in merely imitating nature ? Why not place an actual bit of flesh before the dog ? The Indian tendency, on the other hand, to represent the ideal,

the super-sensual, has become degraded into painting grotesque images. Now true art can be compared to a lily which springs from the ground, and yet is quite high above it. So Art must be in touch with nature—and wherever that touch is gone, Art degenerates—yet it must be above nature. Art is representing the beautiful”.

“The difference between architecture and building is that the former expresses an idea, while the latter is merely a structure built on economical principles. The value of matter depends solely on its capacities of expressing ideas”.

Again he says, “In art, interest must be centred on the principal theme. Drama is the most difficult of all arts. In it two things are to be satisfied—first, the ears and second, the eyes. To paint a scene, if one thing be painted, it is easy enough ; but to paint different things and yet to keep up the central interest is very difficult. Another difficult thing is stage-management, that is, combining different things in such a manner as to keep the central interest intact”.³⁰ Real music is a question of feeling. Feeling is the sole secret of everything.³¹

He declared in Paris, long before Havell and Coomarswamy, that the theory of Hellenic influence on Indian Art was a myth. To him an artistic representation was not mere colours, shade or light but an expression of some idea. He, however, admitted that too much absorption in the ideal often made Indian Hindu Art unreal in the shape of grotesque or unnatural figures as compared to a Grecian statue or an Italian painting.

We learn from Rolland that Vivekananda, while returning from Europe in 1896, went to salute Da Vinci's *Last Supper* at Milan. He was at Rome for the feast of Christmas and on the Christmas eve he had seen the simple worship of the Bambino by the children. Infant Christ and the Virgin Mother greatly attracted him. Yet as Rolland points out, Vivekananda like Tolstoy rejected as dangerous the power of artistic emotion, particularly of music, over mind. It may be recalled that

Tolstoy was an admirer of Vivekananda. In his learned *Dissertation on Painting* Mahendranath Dutta repeated his brother Vivekananda's maxim that a true artist should represent his own spirit, his dual self, through the medium of exterior objects i. e. separate the outer and inner layer of consciousness. In every art there is the *lila* (the play) and the *nitya* (the eternity). Rolland writes : "Vivekananda's own brother has filled in the lines indicated by the Master. I cannot urge European aesthetes too strongly to read his *Dissertation on Painting* (dedicated to the memory of Brahmananda, the first abbot of Ramakrishna Mission, with a preface by Abanindranath Tagore, 1922). The great Indian religious artist places himself face to face with the object he wishes to represent in the attitude of a *yogi* in search of truth ; to him the object becomes the subject".³² Swamiji also inspired Nivedita as an art critic and she imbibed her Master's ideas. The great master artist Nandalal Bose was in his turn influenced by Nivedita and observed : "To the artists, the ideal of Swamiji acts like the backbone of the art, without which art becomes weak and lifeless. Swamiji's method of understanding aesthetic was through *Jnana* (knowledge), while the *Thakur* (Ramakrishna-deva) arrived at the realisation of knowledge through aesthetic. Both of them fully realized the aesthetic and knowledge, only the path of progress was different. Methinks, the path of *anubhava* (appreciation) of the *Thakur* is more suitable for the artists. The artists follow this way. The worshipper of *Rupa* (form) is an idolater, the worshipper of knowledge is a believer of incorporeal being . . . Havell, Abanindranath, Okakura (Japanese artist and art critic), Jagadish Bose etc. all used to discuss art with Sister Nivedita. All of them were inspired by the *ideal* of the Sister"³³ and she in her turn was inspired by Vivekananda. The Sister had discussions with Rabindranath as well. It is stated by many critics that the *Gora* shows the biggest impact of Vivekananda on Rabindranath through Sister Nivedita. According to

Brajendra Nath Seal there was a tinge of Bohemian temperament in Vivekananda's artist nature. Jamsetji Tata, on the other hand, wanted him to divert the ascetic spirit to the cultivation of sciences—natural and humanistic—and wanted his help in this work. That persons like Hiram Maxim, the cannon king, Sarah Bernhardt, the world-famous actress, Madame Calve, the great singer, should be attracted by him show what a colourful personality Vivekananda was. He had inherited from his Master a living experience, not a bias for an Oriental Christ or merely a lead for Veda-Vedanta Puranic version of the old school or an eclectic formula of Buddha, Christ, Sankara or Chaitanya, but the age-old adage that God was in everything and everything was in God not merely as a dictum but as a grand synthetic realisation. "Wherever there is any love it is He, the Lord is present there. Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss ; where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss ; and where friends clasp hands, He, the Lord is present"³⁴ We may use Rolland's expressions—The angelic Master had instinctively resolved all the dissonances of life into a Mozartian harmony, as rich and sweet as the Music of the spheres.

As an orator, as a writer, and as an art-critic, Vivekananda still inspires us with his burning faith and even sixty years after his passing away we prize this as his great contribution, the great realisation—

"Man is not yet. He will have to be"—And that is the Message.

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APPENDIX III

KESHUB CHANDRA SEN

We have to judge Keshub against the background depicted in the previous pages. Claiming descent from the ancient Sen Kings of Bengal the family was first traced at Garifa but his grandfather Dewan Ram Kamal Sen raised it to a position of dignity and affluence, from a clerkship in the Asiatic Society and its native Secretary as he was called, he became the Treasurer of the Calcutta Mint and the Dewan of the Bank of Bengal and took a prominent part in the establishment of the Hindu College. The Sanskrit College had contacts with the Serampore College and Missonaries and also produced a valuable Anglo-Bengali Dictionary which Dr. Marshman commended highly. So Keshub was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was educated in the Hindu College as well as for sometime in the Metropolitan College (in 1853). Shakespeare was one of his favourite studies (we must remember with gratitude Captain Richardson in this connection for having given this taste to Indian students which even after a century is still a glow with the old flame). We are told that Hamlet was one of his favourite plays. He started a literary society and an evening school—‘a good will fraternity’ later and a workingmen’s Institute. He preached a simple and understandable formula—“God was our father and so every man was our brother”. Keshub was drawn to the Brahma Samaj by a chance study of ‘what is Brahmoism’ by Rajnarain Bose. He also established ‘Sangat Sabha’—where not merely translations from Hindu Scriptures were read but translations from Theodore Parker, Newman, Victor Cousin were studied with zeal. This was the time when he wrote “Young Bengal, this is for you.” He was in a sense the pioneer of a revolution. It grew out of the historical conditions of the

country. He perceived it earlier than others. The final sanction of our revolution political, economic or social lay not in hard hitting but in its moral appeal—the appeal for social justice. He felt that moral object cannot be attained by immoral means. A rationally organised society was therefore a necessity in the evolution of harmonious human happiness. We cannot but requote the great eulogy which the Calcutta University's the then Vice-chancellor paid at the annual Convocation on the demise of Kesubchandra—a tribute not only lavish in praises but sincere and unique—Justice Reynods said “when such a man has the divine faculty of impressing others with the great truths which permeate his own soul, he becomes a leader of men, and his appearance ‘inaugurates’ a new era in the spiritual and mental history of the world.....The life of Keshub Chandra Sen is a pledge and an assurance that Providence has yet a great destiny in store for this land.”

Writing on Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen in the “Studies in the Bengal Renaissance” Shri A. C. Banerjee opined that—

“During Keshub’s time the culture of the West had a tremendous impact on that of the East, which unsettled the minds of the youth. God was scoffed at, scepticism ran amock, and morality was despised. Drunkenness and other fashionable vices became widely prevalent in the land. Young Bengal, nay Young India, lost its bearings, revolted and began to leave the pale of Hindu society. Keshub saw the danger. He knew that the youth shaped the destiny of the country. He had deep concern for the welfare of the youth of his time. Keshub sounded a grave but timely warning. He was able to halt the spirit of revolt and stop demoralisation and denationalisation that had begun to corrupt the Hindu society. Keshub wrote out two remarkable tracts viz. Young Bengal, this is for you, and ‘An appeal to Young India’. These two treatises created a tremendous impression

on the minds of the youth. In the first tract he warned our countrymen against godless education which was responsible for rendering incalculable mischief to our land. About godless education Keshub said : "Not only as it shed its baneful influence upon the individual but it has proved an effective engine in counteracting the social advancement of the people and in rendering more frightful the intellectual, domestic and moral destitution of the millions of our countrymen". He further declared : "To the influence of ungodly education is to be attributed the want of progress in the social conditions of the country".

We also learn that his scheme for Primary Education included the following :—

- (a) A competent Indian should be appointed Inspector-General of Vernacular Schools.
- (b) A large number of Night Schools for agricultural and working classes should be opened.
- (c) The masses should be instructed in useful subjects such as Elementary Science etc.
- (d) Grants-in-aid rules should be relaxed in favour of the schools for the lower classes of people.
- (e) Itinerant teachers should give popular lectures in village schools.
- (f) Cheap newspapers which were approved and subsidized by Government should be freely distributed in villages.
- (g) Land-holders should encourage and help in the establishment of schools for mass education in the villages.
- (h) For organising an effective system of Primary Education, Keshub recommended that the really wealthy of all classes, European and Indian officials and non-officials—landlords, merchants, traders, bankers, submit to a small educational tax on their income.

His love for the proletariat and the underdogs was proverbial. He wrote "Who are really 'Big Men'? The lower classes of our country. If they do not exist, who would be able to get his food ; who would be able to drive in his carriage to see the Races ; who would be able to recline on a cosy cushion and smoke his hubble-bubble ? Be mindful, the common people have sacrificed everything. We are having our pleasure and enjoyment at their cost. But how many of us think of showing gratitude to them ? They are providing food for us by toiling day and night and by the sweat of their brows, but how many of us think about their condition even once ? Time will come, when they will no longer keep quiet, nor they will remain prostrate with sorrow and misery."

He addressed the lower classes thus :

"Do not remain in slumber any more. Time has come, arise and see that there is no body who will speak for you. High Government Officials do not pay heed to your grievances, 'Big Men' do not care for you. Will you submit to this insult for ever ? Are not you worthy 'men' ? Has not God given you wisdom and intelligence ? Then why would you remain steeped in ignorance and stupor. You are really the 'Big Men' of our country, don't you know that if you do not exist the country will be reduced to rack and ruin ? Hence you exert, you try, so that you can gain knowledge. After that when you realise your own rights, you will act yourself, then Government will be compelled to pay heed to your demands, any tyrannical 'Big Men' will be afraid of your strength, and in the long run they will be forced to have proper regard for you."

To the ruling race his advice was a prophetic one.

"I hope and trust that the merciful God who has called you to govern our nation will give you wisdom and strength, faith and purity enough to rule our race properly ; if not, India will not be long in your hands. You will be forced to leave India to herself and we shall do our business in the best

way we can. It is your duty so long as you hold it in your hands to act as trustees rendering due account to God for the way in which you treat the people in the country."

Keshub deplored Europe's haughty civilization whose desperate onslaughts had "brought sorrow into her heart, ignominy on her fair name and death to her cherished institutions". He extolled India's "cosmopolitan, catholic and comprehensive spirit". He pleaded for "Unity in variety". He preached : "Let all sects retain their distinctive peculiarities, and yet let them unite in fraternal alliance". That is why he asked Girish Ch. Sen, Aghorenath Gupta, Gourgobinda Roy and Pratap Ch. Mazumdar to study Islam, Buddhism, Hindu scriptures and Christianity respectively. Girish Sen's translation of Koran and তাপস মাল্য Aghorenath's শাক্যমুনির চরিত্র, Gourgobind's গীতা—কৃষ্ণ চরিত্র. Pratap Mazumdars Eastern-christ became famous. His "Sudhir Song" and প্রোকসংগ্রহ were collection of lives and tales and tenets of different religions.

Equally famous was his untiring zeal and work for female education and emancipation. Bamabodhini & Parcharika became ample illustrations for the same. His journalistic attempts at Indian Mirror, Sulava Samachar which had a circulation phenomenal in its age are wellknown. He used to write in ঢাকাপ্রকাশ সোমপ্রকাশ, সাধারণী also. His temperance work and Band of Hope are too prominent features to be forgotten. We read incidentally the story of কুলীনকুমারী বিধুমতী and how she was dramatically rescued from a marriage with an old man by a band who were followers of Keshub, which included such illustrious names as Dr. P. K. Roy, P. K. Gupta, Durgamohan Das, Dwaraka N. Ganguly, Rajani N. Roy, for which legal proceedings were instituted and who were defended by barristers Manmohan Ghosh & Charles Paul.

We must not forget that Keshub was appointed a Minister of the Brahmo Samaj in 1862 by Maharsi who conferred on him the title of Brahmananda i.e. who revels in Brahma, the rejoicer in God or to whom Brahma is Annanda. This

raised the old question of whether non-Brahmins should be allowed to preach from the pulpit. This was also the occasion when the question of further freedom for women was mooted. In 1864 he started on an extensive missionary tour. He was received everywhere with acclamation and enthusiasm and was named the 'The Thunderbolt of Bengal'. Meanwhile however dissensions had been gradually arising in the Brahmo Samaj itself. The question of intermarriage, of widow marriage were issues which were hotly debated. On the 24th. January, 1868 was laid the foundation of 'Mandir of Bharatbarsiya Brabmo Samaj' and Keshub preached.—“The wide universe is the temple of God. Wisdom is the pure hand of the pilgrimage, Love is the true scriptural culture, the destruction of selfishness the true asceticism.”

It was to be an universal church founded on broad principles and the highest and the best in the Bible, the Koran, the Zenda Avesta and the shastras should meet in the same platform. A big Sankirtan party went round the city. The refrain was “To grant salvation, the merciful God has sent His new Faith. He calls one and all, entrance through his gate is free, none need return disappointed ; the high and the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant all are welcome. All will be saved. There is no caste distinction there.”

Incidentally, we must refer here to Kesab's “prayer meetings”. In this he was in a way the forerunner of—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The value of a prayer and its calm and cleansing effect on mind is recognised in all faiths. The only distinction that is sometimes maintained is that a prayer should not be merely an emotional abandon but a purified surrender in meditation. We recall here a quotation from Pratapchandra in Sj. Benimadhab Das's “Pilgrimage through prayer”.—We closed the doors and in the dim oil-light each one poured forth his innermost thought in sincere prayer. A nameless solemnity

filled every heart. The Eternal Spirit of God for the first time seemed a hallowed presence. Kesub prayed and we all wept... He was ignited with an ascetic glow."

He went to England in 1870 with the same zeal and fervour as of Rammohan before him and Vivekananda thereafter. Among the many, he met were not only Queen Victoria but Dean Stanley, Maxmuller, Gladstone, Mortineau, and John Stuart Mill. One of his first acts on return to India was the establishment of an association called the Indian Reform Association with the object of "social and moral reformation" and it had five branches (1) one branch occupied itself with supply of cheap and good literature (2) the second dealt with charitable relief (3) a third with all matters concerning education (4) a fourth with the improvement of the position of Indian women and (5) a fifth with temperance work. And with this end in view, he established '*Sulava Samachar*' the first attempt to get the ears of a wider public and became a land mark in the evolution of a cheap and popular journalism. The temperance movement, the Ladies' Normal School, the Brahmo Marriage Act of 1872 are some of the positive results of the Keshub's movement. Then came the Cooch Behar Marriage and the controversy attached to it. The revolt against Keshub not only by the older and more conservative Brahmos but also by Samadarshi party of A. M. Bose, Sivnath Sastri, Durga Mohan Das and the defection of man like Bejoy K. Goswami and the silent indifference of the Adi Brahmo Samaj led later to the New Dispensation 'নববিধান' in Jan. 1881. He laid down twelve rules of life 'নবসংহিতা' as he called them ; like the Ten Commandments—'Let not the Samhita be a new fetish. It is no infallible gospel. It is only the national law of the Aryans of the New Faith in its application to social life. It contains the essence of God's moral law.' In the meantime a historic fact had occurred—meeting of Keshub and Shri Ramakrishna as well as Prof. Hastie. Keshub had been writing about the Dakshineswar saint in the Indian Mirror and *Sulava Samachar*,

It is a matter of profound debate as to how the challenge of militant Hinduism in the shape of Dayananda Saraswati and of Vedantism in practice of Sri Ramakrishna was absorbed by Keshub. The probable date of the meeting of Keshub and Sri Ramakrishna was 15th March, 1875 and we read in the Indian Mirror (28th. March)—

“We met one (a sincere Hindu devotee) not long ago and were charmed by the depth, penetration and simplicity of his spirit. The never ceasing metaphors and analogies, in which he indulged are most of them as apt as they are beautiful. The characteristics of his mind are the very opposite to those of Pandit Dayananda Saraswati, the former being so gentle, tender and contemplative as the latter is sturdy, masculine and polemical. Hinduism must have in it a deep sense of beauty, truth and goodness to inspire such men as these.” Dr. Kalidas Nag refers to this in these words.

“While sectional and denominational controversies would raise a thousand questions to cloud the main issues, no sane man will doubt that Keshub’s contribution as a reconciler of apparently contradictory creeds was considerable, and that his communion with the unlettered sage of Dakhineswar forms one of the sweetest chapters of spiritual kinship”.

He loved Jesus just like a devout Christian. His ‘Jesus Christ—Asia and Europe’ encouraged a Christian preacher Mr. Tin Ling to hope for the conversion of the Brahmos. His liking of Sankirtana almost branded him as a hearty Vaishnab but they failed to understand the full import of his “Nava Brindaban”. His prayer to God as the Mother and his association with Shri Ramakrishna “Oh thou Mother Divine ! bind me with thy mercies” labelled him as a follower of Sakti cult. He drew inspiration not only from Christ and the Cross but from Buddha and Nirvana, Shri Krishna and Gita, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna, from Rammohan and Debendra-nath, from Mill and Bentham, Huxley and Darwin, Shakespeare



and Wordsworth, a multi coloured dome of many hues in one, a harmony in humanity.

He accepted the challenge of the old as well the new, of faith as well as of reason, of dogma as well of scientific enquiry of each facet of life, yet with an unflinching rationalism in the intellectual, moral and material field and evolved his new doctrine in a spirit of integration and synthesis, of spiritual surrender. That was the great answer to a great challenge, a challenge for a readjustment of our thought, stream and value consciousness, a love for the down trodden masses and a keen desire to change our social behaviour pattern. That is in essence the clarion call of the Nineteenth Century. That is our grand heritage—the olympic torch we have still to carry. We have still to bow to it, if not from an emotional and evolutionary standpoint but from purely practical and selfish ends. The forces of disintegration are standing at our doorsteps in different guises and will invade the sacred citadel of the concept of India, which has a world consciousness behind it which the Nineteenth Century gave to the Twentieth to foster and fondle. If we fail, we do so at our risk. The world is becoming too small today. Tomorrow, we go beyond the horizon into the space beyond. Today and at this very moment our battle is not only at the geographical frontier, but at every front of our national life—economic, social and moral, but let there be no misconception that a true spiritual dialogue also envisages a correct synthesis, a proper ideation and an integration and receptivity with the world around, between a cultural take-off and economic sufficiency. One hundred years may have passed, much water may have flown down the river meandering there the issues of those days may look small in perspective, but the end in retrospect aching human heart and its ideology still require the soothing balm of a dedication to the higher values of life as in the days of Brahmanand Keshub Ch. Sen. We still require a cause, however angry we may be.

We shall remember him for that and we shall also recall that in our voyage from nineteenth to twentieth, from an agrarian to an industrial world he was a lighthouse of hope. This is the message of practical Vedanta in our social lives and his advent has been regarded as a distinct force in our society. It can also be stated of him, in the inimitable words of our poet which he had used about Shri Ramkrishna.

বহু সাধকের সাধনার ধারা
দেয়ানে তোমার মিলিত হয়েছে তারা
তোমার জীবনে অসীমের লীলাপথে
নূতন তীর্থ রূপ দিল এ জগতে
দেশ বিদেশের প্রণাম আনিল টানি
সেইখানে মোর প্রণতি দিলাম আনি ।

APPENDIX IV

A SPIRITUAL CONCEPT OF ART

“Hearken to me, ye children of the Immortals, dwellers of heavenly worlds, I have known the Supreme person who comes as light from the dark beyond.” These words are replica of the famous Upanisadic texts chanted ad nauseam by us. In a lecture delivered in America, Rabindranath Tagore was once asked—What is art? to which different answers have been given by different persons at different times and at different levels. Tagore’s cryptic answer was to quote the above passage and to point out that the building of man’s true world—the living world of truth and beauty—is the function of Art. One would at once realize that there are large tracts of nebulousness in the definition or description as one may call it. The main point in this context, however, would be to emphasise that the artist, whether in dance, drama, painting, poetry, sculpture or any delineation is not merely a copyist representing either the past or the present trends but also a futurist. He is a transmitter. Tolstoy defined Art as an activity by which man infected his fellow man. This transmission is the essence of aesthetic beauty. A poor widow got some flour by begging. It was Christmas time. She made cakes for her starving children and asked them to keep a watch, while she went out to get a few more things. The children were busy playing. A hen came and ate the cakes. The mother on return found the mess and the mother’s reaction, her anger, her disappointment, her sorrow depicted. This is art. Man is essentially a remaker. He is not content with patterns of the past. He knows that every morning brings a new day and every pulse beat a new life. Tagore calls it the consciousness of the Infinite striving to make its expressions. Without going into controversy as to what is finite or what is

infinite we would rather limit the same by saying that True Art at its highest point is the expression which goes beyond the moment, projects our personality into fresh fields and pastures new and reflects possibilities of newer dimensions. The poet's prayer, therefore, is "Where can I meet Thee unless in this mine home made Thine? Where can I join Thee unless in this my work transformed into Thy work? If I leave my home I shall not reach Thy home, if I cease my work I can never join Thee in Thy work. For Thou dwellest in me and I in Thee. Thou without me or I without Thee are nothing."

We know that in a self conditioned world of values as ours still is, this estimate may be treated as a subjective extravaganza, rather than an objective valuation and we are reminded of a Canadian's couplet

There was a young lady named Bright
Who walked faster than light
She started one day
In the relative way
And came back the previous night.

The truth is that Art is an intuitive revealing process in a harmony of what Sri Aurobindo calls, Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit. This may again look like an old world Vedic chant a meaningless jargon in today's world of hunger, atomic annihilation, frustration, chaos and ruin, but yet the world is not a mere machine and though it concentrates on physical science, social economy and material wellbeing, it is vitally integrated with the fountain of the spirit, through expressions in Art, poetry, philosophic wisdom or disinterested work. They have still their value. We have to move back, in Sri Aurobindo's words from the physical obsession to the consciousness that there is a greater self within us and the Universe which is eternally trying to find expression in the life and the body. That is why we have no longer any ascetic quarrel with our mother earth, but rather would drink full

of her bosom of beauty and power and raise her life to a more perfect greatness. All life is yoga, cried Vivekananda. Sri Aurobindo reiterated it and practised it in his own way. Rabindranath followed the same sunlit path in his aesthetic expressions. "A spirit which is all life because it is greater than life, is rather the truth in which we shall most powerfully live." Art therefore in its all comprehensiveness may be compared to the Vedic Agni, "the fiery giver of the word, 'yuvā kavīḥ, priyo, atithir amartyo mandrajihvo ṛtacit ṛtavā, the youth, the Seer, the beloved and immortal Guest with his honeyed tongue of ecstasy, the Truth-conscious, the Truth-finder, born as a flame from earth and yet the heavenly messenger of the Immortals."

The test of human life is its capacity to radiate joy and sunshine. As Bertrand Russel puts it—Man has emerged from the desert into a smiling land, but in the long night he has forgotten how to smile. We cannot believe in the brightness of the morning. We think it trivial and deceptive. We cling to old mottos. Man now needs for his salvation only one thing—to open his heart to joy. He must life up his eyes and say..... No, I can create. This creator in Man makes him an Artist. Art after all is an expression of humanity. It may be the picture of a trivial, but it is on its quest. Rembrandt's Sketches or Van Gags portraits Murillo's Immaculate Conception, Sistine Madonna, the Balbi children Parvoti in sculpture, Nataraj in his cosmic dance, Siva drinking poison, Buddha contemplated in deep meditation are typical examples of the eternal expression of the human, mind and its conscious and subconscious urge leading to a Supra conscious synthesis. We cannot exhaust our natural vigour or fix ourselves in a dominant tradition. Man's artistic life should also be an adventure of free spirit to depart from old moorings and set its sail to undiscovered dimensions. That is the mission of Art. It has to be realized that true artists are not skilled craftsmen but inspired men. M. N. Roy, who



had the sarcasm of a Voltaire with a Socratic lucidity, wrote in his death-bed—Anything that God makes, technology can improve upon. It may be so but the ultimate value of a man is not to be measured by what he says or does but by what he becomes. Even in these days of an unprecedented spiritual malaise life is not a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing. True Art expresses that fundamental truth that despite all our systems of knowledge and analysis to grasp to get the feeling of our world, we are driven to ourselves. That is why even non-recogniser Spender has to become a recogniser.

To Vivekananda, this problem was a simple one. To the mighty Sannyasi, music, art and language were so many vehicles for reinterpreting nature. He gives a very homely example—The energy of the Greek painter is spent in perhaps painting a piece of flesh and he is so successful that a dog is deluded into taking it to be a real bit of meat and so goes to bite it. Now, what glory is there in merely imitating nature? Why not place an actual bit of flesh before the dog? The Indian tendency on the other hand, to represent the ideal, the Super Sensual has become degraded into painting grotesque images. Now true art can be compared to a lily which springs from the ground, and yet is quite high above it. So Art must be in touch with nature—and wherever that touch is gone, Art degenerates—yet it must be above nature. “Art is—representing the beautiful.” The word ‘beautiful’ here has of necessity to be interpreted as a more vital force (than consistency of convention) which should be the inner quality of expression of dramatic integrity as we often find in a real artistes dance or drama or poetry. A vital idea is personified, typified, expressed in a flash. It is not merely the magnitude side of art or its scenical or musical illusion not merely its action or reaction, but its total integrity. Take the case of Tagore’s ‘Natir Pujah’, which typifies a drama of the human soul not merely in a rhythmic treatment of emotions, but in a funda-

mental expression of a quest, a vigil, a transformation. That is true of 'Chandalika' also. The whole dramatic personal would flower into a new life through dance and song enlivened by a need, which is the need of every human mind. That is the spiritual concept of Art. Our earth starts from mud and ends in the sky. We require the union of an utilitarian father and an aesthetic mother. Then Orestes, Oedipus and Prometheus will all meet not merely in saying like Shakespeare's Othello—

Put out the light, and then put out the light
but

Night itself will awaken to the anthem of the stars.

To come to more mundane examples. Two pictures were exhibited in the English Academy Exhibition of 1897, one by a famous artist—Temptation of St. Antony. The saint was on his knees praying. Behind him stood a woman in her natural beauty, barefooted. It was apparent that the artist was more interested in the woman than in the saint. The other was the picture of a rich woman and her child who had called a beggar boy and gave him something to eat. The boy was eating and the girl was looking at him. In the picture, one could see that her thinking pattern was revealed that why should she get whatever she wanted and why should this poor boy go hungry and barefooted. This was Art in its truly spiritual sense. To quote Rabindranath, the work of an Artist was

তাহার কাজ ধ্যানের রূপ বাহিরে মেলে দেখা

To express and record outside what he has seen inside. Abanindra Nath was in Mussorie. He was looking at the mountains. The last embers of the dying sun were being reflected. It was the Bejoya Dasami day, the day of Uma's return. The artist envisaged that she was returning to her mountain home in a blaze of glory typified by the vanishing rays. But the picture actually became one of a bird returning to the nest after the day's vigil but in a riot of colour.

ERRATA

- p 22—Five lines from the bottom for 'idolalory' read 'idolatry'.
- p 34—Foot Note—For 'Brahoism' read 'Brahmoism'.
- p 36—Twelve lines from the bottom, for 'fourties' read 'forties'.
- p 36—2nd para, 6th lines for 'Prajer' read 'prayer', for 'to' read 'at'.
- p 37—2nd line from the top for 'her culian' read 'herculean'.
- p 42—2nd para 8th line for 'incorporotate' read 'incorporate'.
- p 46—Foot note for 'prapuse' read 'purpose', for 'Purain' read 'Purani'.
- p 49—2nd para, 3rd line for 'examplur' read 'exemplar'.
- p 50—2nd para 6th line for 'Sri Aurobinndo' read 'Sri Aurobindo'.
- p 59—Nine lines from the bottom for 'Okakuru' read 'Okakura'.
- p 60—2nd para 1st line for 'Rollands' read 'Rolland's'.
- p 62—4th line from the top for 'devounced' read 'denounced'.
- p 62—2nd para 1st line after the word brilliant put a Comma.
- p 64—Last line—put a full stop after the word 'Summit'.
- p 64—First line add 'OF' and delete 'of' to begin the sentence.
- p 66—Third line from the top for 'inimatible' read 'inimitable'.
Delete 'in' lines 9 and 10.
- p 78—Third line from the bottom for 'refined' read 'refind'.
- p 79—Line 5 from the top for 'Rabindranath is' read 'Rabindranath's'.
Line 6—for 'tingad' read 'tinged'.
Line 9—for 'it' read 'it is'.
- p 87—Line 15 from the top for 'bless' read 'bliss'.
- p 88—Line 13 from the top for 'Diverlt' read 'Drwett'.
Line 13 from bottom for 'and' read 'at'.
Line 3 from bottom for 'latter' read 'later'.
- p 89—Line 6 from the top add a comma after teaching.
Line 11 from the bottom for 'spirits' read 'spirit's'.
Line 6 from the bottom for 'lasting' read 'lashing'.

(vi)

p 90—Line 4 from the top put asterisk marks from the word as and end after the word heart (line 10).

p 90—Line 14 from the top 'politicians' read 'politician'.

p 90—Last line for 'fare' read 'rare'.

p 92—Line 19 — after origin read a comma and for 'W' read 'w' in which.

p 128—9 lines from below para 3, read Meadows for Meadws.

p 128—Ibid read 'Massachusets' for Massachuset.